



North Luffenham Parish Council

Paul Cummings, Parish Council Chairman
11 Digby Drive, North Luffenham, Rutland, LE15 8JS
Tel 01780 720124 email: pbgcummings@gmail.com

St George's Barracks/Steering Group

17 December 2017

See Distribution

ST GEORGE'S BARRACKS DEVELOPMENT INITIAL CONSULTATION WITH VILLAGERS

1. On Thursday 7th December the Parish Council hosted an open meeting in the Parish Church to discuss the proposed development of St George's Barracks by a Public / Public Partnership formed by the Ministry of Defence and Rutland County Council. The meeting was chaired by Cllr Paul Cummings, supported by Cllr Tim Smith and Mr Tim Collins. About 30 people attended the meeting including some from South Luffenham and Edith Weston.
2. In his introduction Cllr Cummings explained that the Parish Council had created a Working Group, whose role was to work with the Village to identify the key concerns relating to the proposed St George's Barracks Development. The Group would advise the Parish Council and help to deliver research and feedback. Additionally using this feedback the Group would provide a conduit to Rutland County Council and seek to influence the Project Board's thinking. The PC Members of the Group were Paul Cummings, Tim Smith and Pete Burrows. Tim Collins had agreed to join the group as an advisor and to lead on environmental matters.
3. Paul explained the rationale for holding the meeting which was to help gauge opinion and to encourage others to join the Working Group, to enable the Parish Council to better understand the Villagers' concerns and aspirations regarding the development of the site. The Notes from a meeting with Helen Briggs, CE RCC on 30 Nov 17, which had been published on the village website were circulated.
4. Paul invited those present to express their concerns regarding the proposed development and the proposals made by RCC at the Public Meeting held on 25th October 2017 in the School Hall:
 - a. **THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.** There was a very clear view from all present that the 'secrecy' and/or commercial sensitivity of the MOU led to distrust. There was a belief that the proposals for the development of the site was being shrouded in secrecy from the outset. Villagers were very concerned at what was in the MoU and what impact that might have upon the development of the site. The private nature of the MOU between RCC and MoD reflected a

lack of transparency afforded by RCC and the Project Board meaning that villagers felt that they had no opportunity to influence the development until the Master Plan had been presented, by which time the die would be set and decisions would be extremely difficult to reverse. The Parish Council were urged to apply to see a copy of the MoU under a Freedom of Information request. – Action Cllr Cummings

b. **GOVERNANCE.** Many present expressed concern about how strong governance could be maintained, with the County Council acting as both the developer and the planning authority. The concept of a ‘Chinese Wall’ between the various elements of the council was not accepted as being a viable proposition. Concern was expressed that one of our own County Councillors was being asked to sit on the project board, which potentially negated their ability to represent the views of the Village. The view of those present was that this hugely contentious scheme required transparency not secrecy from the outset, and that every effort should be made to ensure that the County Council respected the rights of the electorate. The recent debacle of Oakham High Street development was used to illustrate how there was a need for consultation throughout the process. It was essential therefore that RCC be challenged at every decision making point to enable us to influence the development. In this respect it would be important to mobilise the silent majority rather than to allow indifference or a minority view to influence the future of our villages. To date nothing had been heard from Council Members or our MP on how they felt about the proposed development, which could take many years of blight to deliver and have a significant impact upon the quality of life for the whole of the County.

c. **HOUSING REQUIREMENTS - LOCAL PLAN.** The lack of clarity regarding potential numbers of new homes was a real issue. The view of those present was that the recently published draft local plan clearly identified the scale of development needed to sustain the housing needs of the County for the foreseeable future. This did not identify **any requirement** for the housing currently being proposed for the St George’s Barracks site. The presumption therefore was that development was solely to meet a national strategic housing requirement rather than any local need. Most were angered that Rutland was being used as an overflow for other towns and cities. In sum, the view was that this development was not needed within the County yet was being championed by the County Council.

d. **FOCUS.** There was considerable discussion regarding the perceived primary focus on the provision of housing on the site, rather than the provision of leisure and employment needed by the county. It was felt that no imaginative thinking had been given to large scale commercial tourism and leisure facilities designed specifically to make Rutland a more attractive tourist area and attract both wealth and employment opportunities. It was noted that prior to setting up the

Project Board the County Council had made no attempt to seek the views of those affected by their proposals.

e. **SCALE AND SIZE OF DEVELOPMENT.** There was a broad consensus that the term 'Garden Village' being used by RCC was at best disingenuous, when it was clear that what was being proposed was a huge housing scheme, indeed a new town, which was likely to result in a development larger than Uppingham. This would have a significant impact, not only upon local villages, but also the whole county and the adjoining infrastructure such as the major trunk roads - A1 and A47 and rail connectivity. It was strongly felt that the term Garden Village should not be used unless it reflects an average Rutland Village – ie no more than 500 homes. It will be important that our concerns relating the County Councils proposals to build thousands of new homes are shouted from the rooftops across the county.

f. **LAND SALE AND CRICHEL DOWN RULES.** It was apparent that a number of landowners intended to challenge the right of RCC/MoD to make available land that had been compulsorily purchased by the Government to meet a national requirement prior to WW2. Land agents had been tasked to challenge the MoD's view that Criche Down rules did not apply in this case.

g. **WHAT IS THE ENVIRONMENTAL BENCHMARK.** Villagers felt that it was essential that an environmental benchmark be developed which would identify current levels of noise, dust, pollution levels etc.

h. **OFFICERS' MESS SITE DEVELOPMENT.** Having discussed the potential early development of the Officers' Mess site concern was expressed that whilst seemingly of little immediate concern to NL residents the reality was that development on this site might be used a precedent for development on other areas of the site.

i. **INVOLVEMENT OF MP / COMMUNICATIONS.** It was considered essential that our concerns should be brought to the attention of Sir Alan Duncan our local MP. In due course a full communications plan would be needed to alert the County to the size and scale of the development being planned and the potential impact that it could have across the County. It was recommended that all villagers with concerns about the proposed development should write to their MP, Sir Alan Duncan, to ensure that he was best able to represent their views: email address is: alan.duncan.mp@parliament.uk

j. **FUNDING THE CAMPAIGN.** It was proposed that if necessary, 'crowd funding' should be used to raise money to help fight the campaign.

5. Those present were invited to join the Steering Group and a number of names and contact details were collected. Work was now needed to ensure that data protection rules were applied before a database was created. Paul reminded those present that RCC will hold a consultation event for local residents keen to participate in focus groups on 29th Jan in the Officers Mess. Capacity would be 200 or so. There would be 2 x sessions one in the afternoon and one in the evening. Parish Councils and Clerks will be invited to attend. He had agreed to 'leaflet' the village to seek individuals willing to join the focus groups to help to inform the process.

6. **FUTURE PLANS.** The Steering Group will meet early in the New Year to develop further proposals for the development and management of the Steering Group and to identify issues for consideration by the Parish Council.

PBG CUMMINGS
Tel: 01780 720124

Distribution:

External - Information:

Sir Alan Duncan MP
CE RCC
All Rutland County Councillors
Uppingham Town Council
Edith Weston PC
Empingham PC
Ketton PC
South Luffenham PC

Internal:

Village Web Site
Parish Councillors
Parish Clerk
Steering Group