



# St Georges Project

## NL & EW Parish Councils

SUMMARY OF PARISH COUNCILS' CONCERNS AND  
CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO THE PROPOSED  
DEVELOPMENT OF

ST GEORGE'S BARRACKS

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## ISSUE 1 – MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING AND THE POSITION OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Issue: The concept of the County Council working in partnership with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) through an MoU gives cause for much concern and impacts heavily upon public confidence in the ability of the County Council to deliver a solution that is ‘Right for Rutland’.

Were the MoD to act alone in selling St George’s Barracks directly to developers, the County Council would be in a position to judge any planning application on its merits, free from any obligation to assist the MoD with their long term funding priorities. It would also be free to stipulate conditions and limitations on the development in such areas as housing density, employment opportunities, design and content of its individual components. It could also ensure compliance with the local plan. The County Council working directly with the MoD under the terms of a MoU creates a large, powerful organization with no external balancing agency. This results in a situation of small parish councils being left to fight this behemoth on their own. It is little wonder that the local population feels abandoned and betrayed.

## ISSUE 2 - GARDEN VILLAGE PROPOSAL (SCOPE / SCALE)

Issue: With both Edith Weston and North Luffenham villages each containing around 300-400 houses (in common with most other for Rutland villages), there would have been little concern about a proposed “garden village” being of a similar size. However, what is being proposed is to place a new town the size of Uppingham in an area, which has hitherto been predominantly rural in nature. It is hardly surprising therefore that there is considerable concern about what is being proposed. Furthermore, all of Rutland’s perceived housing needs have been met within the current local plan without any requirement for building on the St George’s site.

A development of 1500 plus houses would adversely impact upon the rural character of the local area which is cherished by all who live in the area. A town the size of Uppingham between Edith Weston and North Luffenham would radically alter the character of the local area, place an unacceptable strain on local infrastructure and subject the villages to a protracted period of disruption and soiling. There is therefore strong support in the local area for a development of no more than 500 houses, with accompanying support facilities. Furthermore, any development should be phased so as to allow absorption of each phase before starting on the next.

As to the form of the new “village”, we would wish to see sufficient local (preferably high-technology) employment and provision to meet the increased demands on local shopping, healthcare facilities, schooling, recreation and open pedestrian circulation areas. We would also wish to see clearly identifiable “buffer zones” between the new development and existing villages, and would ask that the main site be developed in such a way as to enhance local tourism and heritage preservation, rather than just seeking high numbers of houses in the interests of maximising income from the site. Any new development should also include genuinely affordable Homes for local people.

## ISSUE 3 - GOVERNANCE

**Issue: The Governance of this project is deeply flawed with a failure by the Local Authority to recognise the impact of recent legislation and the views and opinions of villagers impacted upon by the proposed scheme.**

With respect to the proposed St Georges ‘Garden Village’ Project, there are two aspects, which urgently need to be addressed regarding **governance**. The first stage of governance concerns the test of whether or not the project qualifies to be governed at all. Secondly, if the project passes the criteria needed for the first test, then the question needs to be addressed is “whether or not Rutland County Council is capable of, or resourced to effectively handle a project of this size”. This submission focusses on whether or not the St Georges Village has met the criteria of the first stage. It concludes that it has not, for the following reasons:

1. The background of recent White Papers and government legislation is important. The Localism Act of 2011 which introduced Neighbourhood Planning, was an important part of the Government Manifesto to let local people have more say on local planning. This gave rise to the Neighbourhood Planning Act of 2017 which emphasised that Councils have a duty to respond to adopted post-hyphen examination Neighbourhood Plans. A Neighbourhood Plan which has been made, becomes part of the Local Authority’s Statutory Development Plan.
2. The March 2016 Government Paper entitled ‘Locally Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities’ makes clear that a Garden Village must be a new discrete settlement and not an extension of an existing town or village. It also makes clear that a New Garden Village must have local support and a strong local commitment to delivery. Also it must be based on an evidenced-based local need for the extra development. The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 confirmed the government message that neighbourhood planning is here to stay and that Local Planning Authorities must support it.
3. The Government White Paper of 7 February 2017 ‘fixing our broken housing market’, emphasises that local communities should have control over where development goes and

what it looks like. The National Planning Framework Consultation Papers March 2018 allows for policies to restrict development where adverse effects of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The earlier Policy Exchange paper 2015 'Garden Villages' by Lord Matthew Taylor can be summarised as saying that Garden Villages should be a locally-led vision to meet local needs empowering local people to generate fantastic new communities that local people want.

4. Taking all the above into account, it is clear that the decision by Rutland County Council to form an alliance with the MoD (Memorandum of Understanding) which has led to a decision to press on with a St Georges Garden Village, fails the test of being a project acceptable to the communities of Edith Weston and Rutland as a whole in that it:

- does not accord with the current Local Plan Core Strategy CS6 (uses of redundant military bases) particularly CS6 a, b and c.
- was not locally led
- is not based on evidences local needs (there are in fact no local needs for a development of this size)
- fails the criteria required for the establishment of a garden village of adequate separation from the existing local communities
- was produced without due consultation with local communities
- does not accord with the Edith Weston Neighbourhood Plan (part of the Local Plan). At no stage was the Neighbourhood Plan for Edith Weston mentioned in council presentations and indeed the Edith Weston Neighbourhood Plan Committee has never (to date) been contacted by Rutland County Council
- has been stated that the driving force by the MoD is to maximise the return it gets by disposing of the St Georges Barracks site for housing and clearly to date has had no regard for the effects of this on the local communities. Nor has sufficient consideration been given to alternative uses more aligned with Rutland's existing Local Plan Core Strategies.

5. Quoting from the Rutland County Council Local Code of Governance, the St George's village proposal fails on the following Core Principles:

- there has not been good public engagement/ consultation\*
- the governance body (the Council) has not ensured that they are doing the right things in the right way for the right people in a timely, open, honest and accountable manner
- to date has failed the requirement of taking informed and, in particular, transparent decisions
- has not shown sufficient engagement with local people
- finally has not presented properly evaluated and costed alternatives for the St Georges Barracks site.

As a result, we conclude that the Rutland County Council has not complied with the principles of Good Governance as set out in the Solace/CIPEA Good Governance Framework. Furthermore, we believe that Key Executive decisions resulting in the Council incurring expenditure have been taken/ are about to be taken, which are significant in terms of their

effects on communities living or working in an area affecting more than 2 wards in Rutland. Wards affected are for example not only Edith Weston/ North Luffenham but also Manton and Uppingham wards etc.

6. We therefore ask that the St Georges Garden Village Project be subject to 'call-in' by councillors - the process by which key decisions can be postponed from being implemented by Scrutiny Panel Members until Cabinet and the Council have reconsidered the matter and responded to the concerns expressed in this document.

7. In summary, there is a powerful case, we believe, for the St Georges Garden Village Project to be cancelled, and Rutland's future housing requirements accommodated by a multiplicity of smaller development sites, well located and sensitively designed. Indeed, latest government proposals are for a minimum of 10% of housing allocation to be on sites of less than 0.5 hectares.

8. **Consultation.** We remain concerned at the lack of consultation in this project on the following grounds:

- no public involvement or discussion prior to 31 October 2017
- the discussion groups at the Officers' Mess on 29 Jan 2018 were not fully representative in that attendance was rendered difficult due to the security arrangements at the Officers' Mess
- even more importantly, the discussion groups were not privy to the MoU since this was only released after the end of the discussion sessions
- therefore no reliance can be given to any conclusions that have been drawn from these restricted and ill-informed sessions.

## ISSUE 4 - LOCAL PLAN AND DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

Issue: Within the current local plan 2011 and the draft local plan (Jul 2017) the requirement for building of new homes within the County is considered at length using local, regional and national planning requirements. No suggestion is made in the draft local plan that further sites are needed and the requirement for new homes (Para 5.21 of the Draft Local Plan - 1,503 homes) up to 2036 is met in full. Therefore the additional homes proposed for St George's Barracks are not required to meet the local or regional need.

At no point in the development of their proposals for the development of St George's Barracks have RCC indicated why the proposed development of 1,500 to 3,000 homes is needed over and above the requirement identified within the local plan. The draft local plan identifies a number of

sustainable development principles (RLP2) – many of these are not met by the proposed development, in particular:

- Meet most development needs within or adjacent to existing communities having regard to the defined settlement hierarchy
- Locate development where it minimises the need to travel and wherever possible where services and facilities can be accessed safely on foot, by bicycle or public transport
- Respect and wherever possible enhance the character of the towns, villages and landscape

RLP3 – The Spatial Strategy for Development, identifies where building should be permitted: 70% of the County’s residential development needs will be accommodated within and on the edge of the Main Towns (Oakham, Uppingham) The remaining 30% of the County’s residential development needs will be accommodated through allocated sites; redevelopment and; infill opportunities within the Local Service Centres

Clearly, the proposed huge development in St George’s Barracks, which is contrary to many of the County’s strategic aims for the development of the County and therefore does not fit the Council’s local plan cannot be considered to be “Right for Rutland”.

## ISSUE 5 – LAND OWNERSHIP – CRICHEL DOWN RULES

**Issue: The CEO of RCC has taken no legal advice on applicability of Crichel Down Rules to St Georges Barracks**

Land obtained by public bodies via Compulsory Purchase is subject to specific rules when the land is scheduled for disposal (the Crichel Down rules). These apply the principle that unless the parcel of land has been materially changed, it should initially be offered back to the original land owner or their heirs at the current commercial price.

The MoD has decided that the entire site has been materially changed, and that the Crichel Down rules do not apply. This decision may be subject to legal challenge, as the airfield is made up of 14 different parcels of compulsorily purchased land, and there may be individual parcels that would be judged to have not materially changed (each parcel has to be judged on its own merits, a change in one parcel of land does not determine the applicability of the Crichel Down rules to the other parcels)

The CEO of RCC has taken no legal advice on Crichel Down rules for St Georges Barracks and so there is no current independent view of the MoD decision

## ISSUE 6 - REUSE OF REDUNDANT MILITARY BASES AND CATEGORIZATION AS BROWNFIELD DEVELOPMENT

**Issue: RCC do not appear to follow their own Policy Guidance in respect of the development of Redundant Military Bases.**



Within the draft Rutland Local Plan, RLP8 – Re-Use of redundant military bases, takes account of the potential development of St George’s Barracks. It states that the key requirements for any proposed development on MoD land including St George’s Barracks should:

- re-use existing land and buildings and where appropriate **minimise any built development on undeveloped land within the curtilage**;
- be subject to a transport assessment in order to minimise disturbance to nearby local communities through traffic, noise, other activities or uses;
- protect and where possible enhance the countryside and character of the landscape, natural and cultural heritage;
- be accessed satisfactorily and not generate unacceptable traffic on the surrounding road network;
- be accessible by public transport and include measures to encourage walking and cycling;

The proposed development appears not to follow this policy requirement in that significant development is planned within the area of land (the ‘airside’ element of the site) that is currently undeveloped. It is essential that the other elements of the policy are fully enacted when planning the development.

The designation of a site as being ‘Brownfield’ is important because it enables the Local Authority to authorize development through revised and simplified planning regulations. Whilst large elements of the site are clearly brownfield, the majority of the site is largely undeveloped and therefore it is questionable if it should be considered by RCC to be ‘unprotected’.

## ISSUE 7 - INFRASTRUCTURE

**Issue: Infrastructure development needs to be completed in advance of build start and is fundamental to the successful development of the site. During the build phase, we must avoid clogging up local roads with heavy builders’ traffic.**

The success of this project will be entirely dependent upon ensuring that infrastructure provision is of the highest order. Access to the new site should be predominantly from the East via a new link from the A606, possibly using the road linking Empingham to Warren Farm as a basis. The main site access for construction traffic should be via this route. There will also need to be major improvements to the A606 junction with the A1, which is already clogging in peak periods. Improvements will be needed to the access to A47 via Wireless Hill, which will be impacted upon by the ever-increasing level of freight rail traffic on the North Luffenham rail crossing. Parking in Oakham, Stamford and around Rutland Water will also need to be enhanced.

If the size of the development exceeds 500 houses there will be a need for a new primary school and there will be a knock-on impact on local secondary schooling. See also the paras above on the Garden Village regarding other domestic infrastructure requirements.

Energy efficiency and local generation – currently there is no mention of possible local energy generation/efficiency measures. Offset density by energy efficient property offering?

## ISSUE 8 - HOUSING DENSITY

Issue: The outline proposals presented by RCC propose a housing density of 20 houses / hectare but also suggest that the new development should be similar to a typical Rutland Village. Housing density in most Rutland villages is far less than that proposed by RCC.

Whilst it is understood that under Government guidelines housing density in modern housing estate development can be as much as 40 houses/hectare the proposals for St George's Barracks suggest a housing density of 20 houses/hectare. However, this does not reflect the reality of housing density in the adjacent villages. A simple desktop survey suggests that Edith Weston has currently a density of 8 houses / hectare. North Luffenham, where some 50% of the population is housed in 3 modern (post 70's) housing estates, has a housing density of 13.2 houses / hectare. Whilst the RCC proposals may on first glance suggest an open and airy feel similar to that of a typical Rutland Village, the reality will be significantly different.

## ISSUE 9 - OFFICERS' MESS SITE DEVELOPMENT – A LOST OPPORTUNITY

Issue: RCC propose to bring forward the Officers' Mess site as a 'Quick Win', buying the site from the MoD and preparing to build circa 70 homes on it. This will deny the County the opportunity to build a new and much needed hotel and leisure complex on this prime site adjacent to Rutland Water, and close to major tourist attractions on the South Shore.

With the heavy reliance on attracting tourism to the County the use of the Officers' Mess site as a large housing estate is seen as a lost opportunity for a world class tourist development in an exceptional location. The site is ideally located and would provide essential revenue to the County. This is a one-off opportunity, which could be of national significance. RCC's proposals to identify a site within the main barracks area for this type of development appear to be sub-optimal and make little sense.

## ISSUE 10 - ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Issue: The development of a new town of 1,500 to 3,000 homes coupled with the mineral extraction proposals will have direct and indirect impacts on the local environment. Assurance is required that these potential impacts will be properly assessed and any negative impacts are offset with appropriate mitigation and compensation.

**Landscape** – Rutland Villages are generally located in the bottom of valleys or on slopes leading down to them reflecting the presence of freshwater springs as a water supply. If expanded beyond the confines of the current camp on to the site of the former airfield (and hence on to some of the highest land in eastern Rutland), the new development would become highly visually intrusive across a wide area. The same concern applies to the quarrying proposals; the existing Ketton quarry is well screened from the west by the lie of the land and various woods, shelter belts and hedges. Unless the new quarry is carefully designed with clear and carefully considered restrictions on its extent it will create a major blot on the landscape of eastern Rutland.

**Wildlife** – At a local level the old airfield is of significant importance for wildlife. It contains what may well be the largest area of calcareous/limestone grassland in Rutland or Leicestershire (a habitat of national importance). It also supports the largest population of the Marbled White butterfly in Leicestershire and Rutland. This conservation interest could be lost as a result of the quarrying proposals and expansion of the new settlement on to the airfield. There is a need for detailed surveys to ascertain the extent of the conservation interest. In addition the current Government has recently published its 25 Year Environment Plan (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>), this sets out a policy of ‘net gain’ for the environment associated with new development. Confirmation is sought that this approach be reflected in the proposals being developed by the St. Georges Partnership. There is an additional risk that the development of a new town (as opposed to a ‘*Right for Rutland*’ sized village) could cause excessive recreational disturbance to the conservation interest of Rutland Water, arguably the County’s most important environmental asset.

## ISSUE 11 – ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

Issue: The creation of RAF North Luffenham in 1939 led to the loss of minor roads, bridleways and footpaths, limiting countryside access for local residents ever since. The development of a new town of 1,500 to 3,000 homes will create an increased demand for local recreational access opportunities and it is essential that this is designed in to the development proposals and linked to the aspirations of existing local residents to have better access to their local countryside.

The development of RAF North Luffenham in 1939 led to the closure and loss of several minor roads, bridleways and footpaths. As a consequence there is already a deficit in opportunities for the residents of Edith Weston, North Luffenham, Ketton and Normanton to access the surrounding

countryside due to the truncation and loss of public rights of way (PROW) where they meet they MOD land holding. The paucity of such opportunities and the desire for better countryside access was the single most important environmental issue identified by the residents of North Luffenham in a village wide survey in 2017. The residents of any new town or village in rural Rutland will need and expect to be able to access the surrounding countryside and should be able to do so easily from where they live (without the need to travel by car). It is essential that any development proposals provide adequate accessible green space both within and adjacent to the new settlement; these should meet or ideally improve on the latest standards for 'Accessible Natural Green Space in Towns and Cities'. There will also be a need to provide access to the surrounding countryside through new or re-established PROW. Failure to do so would put unacceptable pressure on the footpath network in the surrounding villages and deprive the residents of both the existing villages and the new settlement of recreational opportunities. The presence of the old airfield adjacent to the new development with its historically important Thor Missile Sites provides an opportunity to create a new country park and nature reserve. This space if well designed and managed would not only provide important green space for both the existing and new communities but would ensure proper conservation of the cold war historic interest and local wildlife. It also has the potential to become a tourist attraction in its own right.

## ISSUE 12 – MINERALS EXTRACTION

**Issue: The development of a major new quarry / quarry extension will have major impacts on the surrounding communities, the local landscape, local wildlife and on the new town development. The scale, and hence financial return, from the quarrying proposals needs to be balanced against the need to minimise its visual intrusiveness, its impact on nationally important wildlife habitats and the impacts on local communities. Assurance is required that these potential impacts will be properly assessed and any negative impacts are offset with appropriate mitigation and compensation.**

While quarrying has a long history in Rutland older quarries were relatively modest in scale. The existing Ketton quarry site is already very large and the creation of a new quarry immediately adjacent to that site would create a 'super quarry'. This would have a whole range of impacts on the surrounding countryside, its landscape and local communities. It is essential that the proposals are carefully constrained so as to keep the quarry to the north of the highest land on the airfield so as to minimise its landscape impacts, provide adequate separation from existing and new communities and to ensure that the Thor Missile context can be conserved within the context of its original military setting.

It is also important that careful consideration is given to after use of the new quarry given that the existing airfield is of high nature conservation interest. Restoration of the area subject to mineral extraction as a nature reserve would also eventually provide additional green space for both the new

and existing communities and provide an opportunity to re-establish public rights of way and link these to those at Rutland Water.

### Issue: Mineral extraction may not be economically viable.

The minerals on the airfields site may be difficult to extract economically. Previous British Geological survey identified that the area contains Lincolnshire limestone of the Jurassic age. This material is soft, porous, thin and inconsistent. It is capable of producing lower quality aggregates (sub base, fill material), building stone, lime or could be used in the production of cement. It may potentially be cheaper to import limestone from abroad for use as a Cement production feedstock.

## ISSUE 13 - BUFFER ZONES

Issue. The proposal to build a “Garden Village” on the site of St George’s Barracks will create a significant impact on the lives of the existing villagers of Edith Weston and North Luffenham. To ameliorate the impact of the proposed build and establishment of a major 100 Hectare quarry and the disruption that this will inevitably cause, it will be essential that effective buffer zones are created between the villages and the proposed new build.

To be eligible for Government Funding DCLG’s requirements are that “a Garden Village must be a new discrete settlement, and not an extension of an existing town or village”<sup>1</sup>. It is important therefore from both a funding and social perspective that clear buffer zones need to be imposed from the outset, and maintained thereafter to ensure the integrity of the existing villages and to reduce the impact that the new build will have on lifestyle and social cohesion. At present a clear buffer zone exists to the South of the Site (between the existing Barracks and Edith Weston Road and to the East (between the site and Ketton Road) and to the North (Ketton / Normanton Road). The boundary to the West is more problematical but has a significant impact on Edith Weston which must be considered in the planning phase. In the Memorandum of Understanding there is a disturbing statement (1.3 Table 3 R15) *“Land surrounding the site not in RCC or MOD ownership limits the ability of the partnership to develop the site as indicated by the master plan e.g. supporting infrastructure and access. The partnership agrees to explore further land acquisitions or involvement in the partnership of other landowners as and where appropriate to enhance project aims. The Housing Infrastructure Fund has been identified as a potential funding source for this element of the project.”* Early clarification of exactly what this means is needed and a firm commitment made by RCC that as the planning authority they will not allow building of homes or quarrying beyond the bounds of the existing airfield site.

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<sup>1</sup> Para 14 of DCLG’s document Locally Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities.

## ISSUE 14 - SOCIAL DYNAMICS

**Issue: The potential social effects of up to 3,000 homes creating a dormitory town and its impact upon surrounding villages.**

The RCC plan cannot replicate a Rutland village community, which will have grown and evolved over many hundreds of years. Whilst difficult to define a village, a degree of inter-dependence reflects its nature, with individuals both contributing to and taking from the tight community in which it lives. This 'community spirit' ensures that many individuals choose to live in villages rather than towns, despite the lack of resources – eg shops, entertainment etc. The success of a 'new' village will depend on the ability of the community to create this ethereal quality. Social cohesion and on site employment opportunities will be essential because without this what will be created will be a dormitory town with no heart.

The structure of the development over time with a community hub, a pub, a post office, village shops, a sports centre, an open space and enterprise units will change the social structure and cohesion within the surrounding villages, potentially generating a 'them and us' situation, which is not a desired outcome. Some investment will need to be made in the existing villages, utilising development funding (CIL) received from the proposed new town.

## ISSUE 15 - BUSINESS AND LEISURE

**Issue: To ensure social cohesion and sustainable development it will be essential that business and leisure opportunities are created from the outset of the project.**

The acceptance of the proposed development by the communities of NL and EW and its integration within these village communities, will depend not only its size, but also in ensuring that it does not become a 'dormitory town' for commuters to London, Leicester, Peterborough etc. The opportunity for businesses to develop and provide on site local employment which might include hi technology employment (a Science Park), small scale manufacturing, home-working as well as shops, restaurants and leisure facilities will help community cohesion, development and sustainability as well as reducing the impact on the roads. There will need to be ample provision of green spaces for a variety of leisure activities, pathways and trails, as well as indoor recreation and places for the community to meet.