

Dear Ms. Sharp,

With the impending review of the planning consent recently issued for the Garden Village development at the disused St George's Barracks, we strongly feel it essential to consider the consequences should the original consent be overturned by Rutland County Council.

We accept that change within a community is often a difficult concept and may easily lead to erosion of the qualities of life for those directly impacted.

However, because of pressures from modern day life, change is inevitable and it would be folly to ignore the demands placed by society.

Rather, we need to wisely ensure the changes are controlled to minimise impacts.

The situation within Rutland is somewhat unique in that there is a choice for meeting Governments, and thus the communities, demand for new housing. Either: we accept the Garden village development, and thus contain the impacts to the area around St George's Barracks area, or we accept the spread of this housing within the villages around the whole County.

St George's Barrack area is defined as 'Brownfield' site and thus, according to the National and Local Planning policies, is more appropriate for such development than having the spread of housing within rural green field areas of the wider County.

A rejection of the already determined proposal by Council Members would serve to invoke the law of unintended consequences.

The knock on effects will be to render the draft local plan void, requiring a further lengthy and costly (to all County residents paying the local Council Tax) consultations in drafting a new local plan.

During the intervening 3 - 5 year period of plan preparation, the County would be without any effective legal direction for planning development.

The consequences of this would allow developers, rather than the local community, to determine the scale and nature of housing and industrial developments County wide.

To meet Government targets, this could mean at least 30 new houses and associated supporting infrastructure around the 50 villages within the County.

At Greetham, we are beginning to see the consequences of the current uncertainty caused by the rejection of the funding for St George's Barracks development with speculative applications for warehousing, residential housing and quarries.

This has had knock on consequences whereby planning obligations for restoring worked out quarries to valuable calcareous grasslands are already being ignored by the landowner on the basis a speculative bid for industrialisation of the area will be made.

The speculative applications for industrial warehousing, quarries and significant housing developments are contrary to the policies of both the current and draft local plans. At a public meeting the applicant made clear they considered the current policies out of date and would appeal any rejection of the applications. Without adoption of the draft local plan, any such appeal would be difficult for the planning authority to challenge.

The uncertainty which would prevail should the draft local plan be rejected will only lead to this type of speculative application being made Countywide, with neither the planning authority, nor local communities able to prevent the creeping countywide industrialisation and increased housing density.

Over recent years the County Council, along with other local groups, have developed policies to increase Biodiversity around the County, including the regionally important

calcareous grasslands, identified in the Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan as priority for developing and which have seen over 40% decline in the past decades.

Rather than increasing biodiversity, scattered individual housing developments and the creeping industrialisation of the County will only increase this decline. Compared with the development of the Garden Village proposal, the alternative option would lead to significant biodiversity loss and erosion of the quality of rural life throughout the County.

If the current consented development is overturned by Committee in September, we understand the MOD would still be required to dispose of this brownfield area of land and as the local plan would no longer be valid, developers may seek to build far more houses on the site than provided for in the Draft Local Plan. The original application was for 3,700 houses and at a greater density there is enough space to build more than 5,000 homes.

So we may face a double whammy - most villages throughout Rutland being required to accommodate uncontrolled developments within their areas AND seeing the uncontrolled development of St George's Barracks.

We accept it is not an easy choice of change, but surely it is important to ensure the impacts to the County as a whole are minimised and look to provide the Garden Village proposal with the resources needed to control and integrate within this rural idyll.

We would urge Council members to face up to their responsibilities and ensure the whole County is protected from speculative development. As identified within the Future Rutland Conversation project, the whole County should be subject to controlled growth affording real protection to its rural setting as desired by the whole community.

Kind regards

Ken Edward
Chair of Greetham Parish Council