

PUBLOW with PENSFORD PARISH COUNCIL

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Core Strategy Spatial Options Consultation

Planning Tomorrow Today

The Parish Council has considered this matter at its recent meeting and our comments are set out for your consideration. Representatives from the Parish Council attended the consultation meeting on 23 November and the Rural Area meeting on 27 November attended by councillors from Chew Stoke, Chew magna and officers from B&NES.

The Parish Council are firmly of the view that we should continue to remain as part of the greenbelt area and not designated as a Policy C settlement.

Key issues are;

1 We recognise that to do nothing and just object to any development is not a realistic option as this could result in central government imposing a plan without the benefit of local comment and input which will ensure that key factors impacting directly on the areas affected and indirectly on the surroundings are considered.

2 The options are in the view of B&NES a realistic response to the RSS but below the levels they set out.

3 B&NES approach embodies ;

Brownfield before Greenfield development

Infrastructure 'up front'

Housing development in line with job growth

Key points appear to be;

1 Infrastructure must be a government commitment and be 'signed up to' before development proceeds. If not it is likely to be, at best, responsive to increased problems rather an embedded element of development plans.

2 A big risk is that infrastructure investment will not be adequate or timely enough to 'get ahead' of needs. A commitment list should be included in the final document. Infrastructure must be interpreted in the widest sense and not just the narrow definitions relating to, for instance, transportation as we have further identified later in our response. Unless this is embedded in the strategy and funding committed the concept of sustainable communities will not be achieved and the result will be dormitory suburbs commuting into Bristol and Bath.

3 While easy to incorporate in a concept the risk that permanent jobs will not be created across the skill ranges with career development opportunities in anything like sufficient numbers is high. There

is also a risk of job losses with existing businesses choosing to relocate and sell land for development. Within our own Parish there are currently very few employment opportunities and realistically it is unlikely that there will be any significant job creation opportunities in the Parish and this is a material factor in our view that we should not be designated as a Policy C settlement. Considering this from the position of B&NES as a whole it is probable that central government will include construction jobs as job creation which will disappear when development is completed leaving a potential void. Development and regeneration work is in the long term context of a sustainable community not a long term fix. In addition to the identification of land for 'industrial' use detailed consideration will need to be given to address how significant employers will be attracted to and retained in the area. For example, the largest employer in the Radstock area has already closed and the future of the Cadbury factory in Keynsham is, at best, questionable. The area, including our own Parish, is already a net outward commuting area.

4 The infrastructure requirements needed to attract and retain significant employers will be very significant and if this fails all that will be created will be dormitory suburbs and increased traffic volumes through the rural areas which already suffer significant disruption and problems as the A37 splits the village of Pensford in half and there is also a series of 'rat runs' through other areas of the Parish. This further impacts our view that Pensford should not be designated a Policy C settlement as it is not feasible to create a sustainable village centre.

5 Bristol airport development and the impact of this on the surrounding area must be an integral part of long term strategic thinking. Our Parish already suffers a high degree of noise pollution and traffic travelling to and from the airport particularly on the B3130, the access road to Chew Magna and its facilities.

6 The Bristol strategy puts Hicks Gate/ Brislington as a long term contingency area and is against urban extension within its boundaries. Hicks Gate area at least benefits from road access to the motorway system and rail network and is arguably an easier area to which to attract employers.

7 Rural options for eg Radstock and Midsomer Norton again talk to significant job creation which is probably unrealistic and will increase commuting. As previously stated the largest employer in the Radstock area has already closed. This will add to traffic volumes on the main routes such as the A37 and other rural roads.

8 Rural impact outside the development area will be significant eg A37, rat runs and rural amenities and is likely to be ignored centrally not least due to lack of local knowledge. There is already an impact on our Parish with, for example, fly tipping, motor bikes and four wheel drive vehicles causing problems and this will only increase to the detriment of enjoyment of the green belt areas for all residents and visitors.

9 Developers are likely to market the area of South Bristol as adjacent to the Chew Valley and its amenities, including our own Parish, rather than talk to sustainable communities as this will maximise their return. Their likely commitment to sustainable communities and all the resources required to achieve this is, in our view, doubtful and the level of infrastructure investment will not, realistically, be funded by them either in terms of initial capital outlay or ongoing revenue cost.

10 As developers will not be likely to fund the wider infrastructure costs these will require central government funding and it is essential that commitment is in place before any development commences otherwise it will end up in the pipeline of government prioritisation and not be delivered like so many projects in the past.

11 There is currently no real shopping area in Whitchurch and Gilda Parade or in terms of quality, Keynsham. A retail park will only increase traffic and if sustainable communities are to be created the 'high street' concept with a mix of facilities is an essential requirement. Again this requires migration of quality businesses into the area. Residents of our Parish are likely to use Keynsham as the preferred shopping area were there a wider range of retail outlets but which is unfortunately not well served by public transport from the Parish.

12 In referring to infrastructure it must be clear that the status quo is poor and that investment is needed to address current issues without any further development. For example, Pensford has already lost a proportion of its central parking to provide bigger bus stops but with no integrated plan to deal with rural residents who cannot walk to the village centre either to catch the bus or to use the one remaining general shop/post office. A further reason why we are of the view that Pensford should not be designated as a Policy C settlement. These rural facilities are likely to come under increasing pressure with the creation of further facilities nearby and the disadvantaged members of those communities will suffer most as a result.

13 The impact on rural communities and the development of a strategy for them as envisaged in leaflet 7 is an important issue for B&NES to address in consultation with those communities including the identification of any 'investment' required for inclusion as part of the delivery of the final strategy. It is likely that the 'knock on' effect of development will be underestimated, for example, increased traffic to the airport, HGV's and other traffic travelling to/from any significant employers in the area as well as increasing through traffic.

14 Whilst we have set out our view that Pensford should not be designated as a Policy C settlement the Parish Council is supportive of additional affordable housing based on the exception site principle and have actively explored such a development with Somer Housing and B&NES but so far without success.

Conclusion

Infrastructure as B&NES rightly recognises is critical and we consider this includes both initial capital investment and the future revenue funding. It should include; road plans, transport links, job creation, retail, schooling, medical, social/sporting requirements for all age groups, policing and other support services which will contribute to the aspiration of a sustainable community. Unless this joined up approach is created the end result will be dormitory suburbs, in effect an extension of the Bristol city boundaries and the resultant loss of individuality of the communities affected such as Whitchurch and a resultant 'knock on' effect to the outlying rural communities.

From a process perspective there may be merit in having a consultation with Parish Councils setting out what B&NES sees as the key issues from the consultation process and how they should be 'weighted' and prioritised prior to finalising and formally issuing an updated strategy document. This will provide an opportunity to get as close as possible to a consensus view which if included in the

final document will add weight to its conclusions. As already mentioned we have met with B&NES officers and other Parishes to discuss implications arising from the Core Strategy and, in particular, the impact on the surrounding rural communities. We are of the opinion that this was useful and constructive and that there will be benefit from continued dialogue throughout the process.

In making these comments we have specifically avoided detail observations on the specific questions and core options as few of them have a direct impact on our Parish. However, there should be clear statement of what is considered to be a realistic and manageable scale of development. The concept of major developments as envisaged in the document should we feel be challenged against an alternative strategy of smaller developments spread across more areas, for example, Hicks gate/ Brislington, Stockwood Vale. This may contain the need for radical infrastructure investment and spread the job creation load. To achieve this a consultative approach by all the Local Authorities is needed and while this may be difficult to achieve it would appear to us that individual authorities just responding for 'their patch' may well not achieve the long term aspirational goals, not least in respect of infrastructure requirements.

Starting with an initial outline in the core strategy the whole range of key issues, investment needs and risk need to be evaluated and developed before meaningful comment on specific detail can be made without it being a general 'whinge' that there should be no material development.