

## **Clash likely over South East housing target**

The Government and the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) look set to clash over the number of new homes to be built in the south east over the next 20 years. The confrontation is likely to come this November at the public examination into the South East Plan, the blueprint for development in south east England between 2006 and 2026.

### **28,900 or 46,000 new homes per year? Evidence-based realism or 'pure fantasy'?**

As we reported on the front page of the Autumn/Winter newsletter, part 1 of the Plan, which looked at development across the whole region, was submitted to Government in August 2005 following extensive consultation. A second draft, submitted to Government last March, included the results of consultations on the sub-regional aspects of the Plan carried out last autumn by the regions' county councils and unitary authorities.

The Plan sets the overall level of new dwellings at 28,900 per year (the past target was 28,000 per year). It acknowledges that a backlog of housing needs to be addressed from 2006 to 2016, but points out that nearly 32,000 new homes were built in the region in 2004-2005.

However, a report produced by consultants for the Government Office for the South East (GOSE), found that if projected economic growth is to be sustained, 46,000 new homes – the most radical of four different scenarios - would be needed per year. According to the report, the biggest increases would be needed on the outskirts of London, south Hampshire, the M4 corridor and Oxfordshire. The report accepts there would be significant environmental costs, with considerable increases in carbon emissions and substantial additional losses of greenfield sites.

SEERA's chairman, Cllr Keith Mitchell, has dismissed the report's housing figures as 'pure fantasy', arguing that it has nothing like the evidence base built up by SEERA over the last two years, and says it would be happy to contest the figures at the Examination in Public (EIP) in November.

### **A new Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East**

The Plan (more formally the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East) is being prepared as a result of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which brought in a new system called 'spatial planning'. This goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together policies on how to develop and use land with other policies - such as the environment, health, social integration and so on - that also affect people and places.

The draft Plan's core objectives are to balance economic and housing growth with environmental and social aspirations. It recognises that infrastructure – efficient transport, schools, healthcare and so on – has failed to keep pace with growth in the past, and aims to redress this imbalance. However, it also recognises that we must *'tread more lightly in our demands, so that we first stabilise and then begin to reduce the "resource footprint" of the region, and make significant progress towards more sustainable patterns of new development and lifestyles.'* It also acknowledges the thorny issue of how to balance development with the pressures on water resources.

The Plan sets the following targets for housing: at least 60 per cent of new housing to be built on previously developed (brownfield) land; increasing substantially the supply of affordable housing, with an overall target of 35 per cent of new homes as affordable; increasing housing density to an average of 40 dwellings per hectare, but with a strong emphasis on high design standards; making more efficient use of the existing housing stock, through appropriate conversions and refurbishment; and creating more small-scale affordable housing sites in rural areas.

### **Implications for Hampshire**

As reported in the Autumn/Winter newsletter, Hampshire County Council and the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), circulated a paper called *Where Shall*

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*We Live?* proposed five options for where the 2,000 home shortfall should go: the reserve site at Barton Farm (Winchester), Andover, a possible MoD site at Whitehill (near Bordon), a combination of Andover and Whitehill, or shared out between the local authorities in the area.

Locating all 2,000 at Whitehill proved to be the most popular option among the Hampshire residents and organisations that responded to the consultation. However, it is now less likely that the MoD will release the land, and the County Council has therefore decided on the second most popular option – splitting the 2,000 among all the local authorities, but taking into account the latest information on housing land supply.

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## ***Dever Society responds to South East plan***

The Society has responded to the most recent consultation on the South East Plan, which closed on 23 June. We reiterated our call for the green areas between a) the South Hampshire sub-region and Winchester and b) the south western boundary of the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley sub-region and Winchester, to be designated as ‘strategic gaps’. These provide special protection to preserve the identity of settlements and prevent coalescence.

Although the Plan includes a policy for the designation of strategic gaps, we have opposed the criterion in the policy that specifies that they should be no larger than five miles at their widest points. We have also called on SEERA to expand the criteria in the policy, and to include, for example, the issue of water resources. This is because areas of undeveloped land play an important role in preventing run-off and absorbing water into underground aquifers.

### **Next steps**

The results of the most recent consultation will be considered at the Examination in Public in November. This is an independent and informal type of public inquiry conducted by an independent panel of inspectors. The inspectors will report to the Secretary of State who will finalise the plan, and it will then be formally adopted as the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East. Local authorities will be obliged to conform to the Plan in their planning decisions.

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## ***Winchester City Council adopts Local Plan***

Winchester City Council has adopted the Winchester District Local Plan Review.

After consulting on the changes it proposed to make as a result of the inspector’s report on the public inquiry into the Local Plan, the Council considered the representations it received and has decided not to make any additional changes.

It became the statutory development plan for the district on 6<sup>th</sup> July.

## ***Spreading it about***

There’s quite a bit of it going on in Hampshire – muck spreading that is. And a real stink it’s causing.

Sewage sludge, also known as biosolids, is being spread on the fields of mid-Hampshire. In fact, London has been sending it to the fields of the county, particularly around Woodmancott and in the Candover Valley, for some years, leading to smells during transportation and stockpiling (ie before it is spread), excessive lorry movements, and the possible contamination of the water supply aquifer.

The sludge is what is left behind after water is cleaned in waste treatment works. High in organic content and plant nutrients it makes, in theory, good fertilizer. Advocates enthuse about the natural ability of sludge, like soil, to immobilise potentially toxic metals, and they point to cleaner water, as well as higher crop yields for farms that use the material. However, most developed countries regulate its use because it also can contain a multitude of metals, organic pollutants, and pathogens.

The application of sewage sludge to land, especially on agricultural lands, has been contentious since the late 1980s, when national and international clean water regulations prohibiting the ocean dumping of sludge were first enacted. By 2020 the EU will require 75 per cent of biosolids to be deposited on land.

In May, representatives from Winchester City Council, Micheldever and Northington parish councils, The Dever Society, concerned residents and local MP, Mark Oaten, discussed their concerns. Mr Oaten said he would seek reassurance on the safety and control of sludge spreading, particularly in relation to the aquifers, and the minimising of nuisance from traffic, smell and deposits.

We will return to this topic in a future issue.

(Sludge regulations are policed by the Environment Agency and enforced by a voluntary agreement known as the Safe Sludge Matrix – see [www.netregs.gov.uk](http://www.netregs.gov.uk))

## ***Electronic Newsletter***

Ever concerned about rising mailing costs, we have decided that we will no longer be able to post copies of the Newsletter to members who do not let us know their e-mail address, so that we may send you an electronic version.

If you do not do so (we appreciate that not everyone is on e-mail) our membership of The Dever Society will remain unaffected, although we would ask you to let us know of any future change of address to ensure we maintain up-to-date records.

Members whose copies are currently hand-delivered may opt for e-mail delivery if they wish, of course.

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## **Events**

On Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> May, the Society's first clay shoot raised more than £6,000.

Held at the famous Roundwood Shooting Ground, near Micheldever Station, fourteen teams of guns competed under the professional direction of Brian Hebditch, the school's proprietor and chief instructor. Brian has more than 30 years' experience as a top clay shot, and has represented Britain at the Olympics.

### **Insert pic of shoot here**

Estate owner Susanna Church presented each member of the Bighton Partridge Club, the winning team, with an engraved glass tankard and bottles of Champagne for runners-up, Fallen Saints.

During the day, Peter Corbett of estate agents, Savill's, auctioned lots presented by friends of the Society. Raising nearly £1,400, these included a day's fishing for two rods on the Upper Itchen, donated by the Baring family; a flight, a roebuck cull, a gun at Newdown, and four tickets for the Motor Show preview, donated by ExCeL London, the international exhibition and conference centre in Docklands.

The Society wishes to thank all the donors and successful bidders for their generosity.

## **Hugh Sandars joins Society committee**

The Society recently strengthened its Executive Committee with the appointment of Hugh Sandars. Hugh's specific brief is to liaise with parish councils in the Dever Valley, attend relevant hearings and council meetings when officers of the committee are unavailable, and to help with fundraising efforts.



Hugh and his wife Sue have lived in Micheldever for 30 years, in what was once the village carpenter's cottage. He spent his childhood near Odiham, while Sue was brought up on a farm in Somerset.

Hugh's Army career took him to Germany, Singapore and Hong Kong, as well as periods in the UK, latterly helping to run an ex-Service employment consultancy. Supposedly retired, he is now a trustee of his regiment's charity, managing trustee of its museum in Warwick and a part-time instruction taker for a will-writing firm. He is on the Committee of the Local History Society, and is Poppy Appeal Coordinator for the parish.

His other main interests are country pursuits, conservation and history. Hugh and Sue are members of the Campaign to Protect Rural England. They have two adult children.

## **New Membership Secretary**

Our new Membership Secretary, succeeding Kay Cole, is Sue Bell, an independent speech therapist who has lived at Micheldever Station for 25 years. Being a self-styled country girl, the rural setting initially made it the perfect spot.



But, she recalls, within six months earth-moving equipment began excavating footings for what became a new depot for Micheldever Tyres and not long afterwards Eagle Star announced their threat to drown the landscape under a sea of houses. "Sixteen years on," she says, "I believe that we must continue to be vigilant".

Kay did a terrific job as Membership Secretary and we shall greatly miss her dedicated approach to this essential task.

## **Jacqui leaves us**

We are sorry to report that Jacqui Lindsay, our hard-working part-time Office Manager, has resigned. She joined in 2002.

Society chairman, Richard Cowen, said: "Jacqui has been an enormous help to me and my predecessor. During her time with us, she has used her considerable IT skills to get our website up to date, as well as running the day-to-day business effectively. We will all miss her".

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**The Dever Society, Cowdown Farm, Micheldever, Hampshire, S021 3DN**

**Tel: 01962 774040; Email [deversociety@compuserve.com](mailto:deversociety@compuserve.com)**

**Website: [www.deversociety.org](http://www.deversociety.org) Registered Charity 1003093**

President: The Lord Ashburton KG KCVO DL, Chairman: Richard Cowen

Vice Chairman: Tessa Robertson, Hon Secretary: Charles Hobbs, Hon Treasurer: Phil Dowson

Membership Secretary: Sue Bell

Executive Committee: Phil Bryant (Editor, Newsletter), Simon Hughes, James Dockray, Hugh Sandars

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