

Twenty-year planning blueprint bad news for Zurich/Eagle Star

Part 1 of the South East Plan, the blueprint which will guide all development in the region from 2006-2026, was submitted to the Government by the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) in August, after extensive public consultation.

As reported in the Spring/Summer Newsletter, the Dever Society's response to the consultation included a call for a Strategic Gap to be designated for the central Hampshire area, which would include Micheldever and the Dever Valley. Although Part 1 of the SE Plan stops short of identifying potential areas for Strategic Gaps, it leaves the decision to designate them to local authorities. This is good news, since Winchester City Council supported our call for a Strategic Gap in its own response to the consultation.

Regional housing numbers proposed

Part 1 proposes that an average of 28,900 new homes should be built in the region per year from 2006 to 2026. It aims to concentrate development in areas of economic growth and to aid regeneration. Hampshire's share of the 28,900 is 6,100 new homes per year, divided among three areas:

- South Hampshire sub-region: 4,000 per year
- North Hampshire sub-region (part of the Western Corridor): 1,300 per year
- Central Hampshire and the New Forest: 800 per year

Setback for Zurich/Eagle Star?

The Central Hampshire area is the area that most concerns the Society. If this number of new homes remains in the final version of the SE Plan approved by the Government, Zurich/Eagle Star's plans for a new town at Micheldever would receive a considerable setback, and it seems unlikely that a new town could be built before 2026. However, knowing Zurich/Eagle Star, they will continue to promote their plans at every opportunity during the SE Plan approval process, and the Society will be watching their actions closely.

New consultation launched

SEERA is now carrying out a further consultation to determine exactly where these new homes should go. In Hampshire, the consultation was carried out by the County Council and Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), which includes all the local authorities in the South Hampshire area. In September, the two bodies published a consultation paper, *Where Shall We Live?*

Where Shall We Live? outlined a number of options for accommodating the required number of new dwellings within the three areas. For the Central Hampshire area, sites for 14,000 new dwellings have already been identified in local plans and on other sites within towns, and five options were proposed for the remaining 2,000 (ie 100 per year). One of these was the reserve site at Barton Farm, north of Winchester; the others were at Andover, at a possible MoD windfall site at Whitehill near Bordon, at a combination of Andover and Whitehill and finally, to share them among the local authorities in the area.

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Disappointingly, *Where Shall We Live?* failed to include any information on how the options were arrived at (for example, it is not clear whether they were chosen on the basis of housing need, economic growth, the need for regeneration and so on). As a result, the Society did not choose any of the five options, instead reiterating our opposition to development at Barton Farm.

The County Council and PUSH are currently analysing the responses to *Where Shall We Live?* and will submit their proposed housing distribution for Hampshire to SEERA in December. SEERA will then prepare Part 2 of the SE Plan, and submit it to Government in March 2006.

Part 1 of the SE Plan can be viewed on the SEERA website, www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/plan/view_plan.html

Inspectors report into Winchester Local Plan published

The Planning Inspectors who presided over the Public Inquiry into the objections to the Winchester District Local Plan Review reported to Winchester City Council in September. The Inspectors' report gave a qualified green light to the Council's plans for the district up to 2011. It endorsed the importance of strategic and local gaps and the need to protect the wider countryside from inappropriate development. It also supported the City Council's policy of concentrating development within the main built-up areas in general and on previously developed land in particular.

While the Report concluded that no additional housing sites would be needed in the short term, it recommended that the Council should allocate four sites to be held as 'local reserve sites' adjoining the main settlements of Winchester, New Alresford and Denmead, in case insufficient development comes forward within the towns and villages or the Waterlooville Major Development Area (MDA). Together these sites could provide about 400 new homes.

In agreeing that most development should be focused on the District's main settlements, the Inspectors raised concerns about allowing frontage development in the smaller settlements. They felt that "this no longer reflects the underlying principles of the Plan which seek to concentrate development in sustainable locations" and recommended replacement with an infill policy to limit the amount of housing to only those locations "where they would best support local communities".

While they did not support the Council's proposal to seek a proportion of affordable housing on smaller housing sites, they recommended an overall target average of 35 per cent affordable housing, with 40 per cent within the Winchester urban area, and the Waterlooville MDA and Winchester City (North) (ie Barton Farm) reserve MDA. Thirty-five per cent

is the proportion recommended for the "local reserve sites", with 30 per cent retained elsewhere.

Support for Barton Farm development, but sympathy for objectors

The Dever Society was one of the many objectors to Barton Farm. While sympathetic to many objections, the Inspectors made it clear that Winchester City Council had to include specific provision for an MDA at 'Winchester City (North)' since the Hampshire County Structure Plan required it. The location of this and other reserve sites were controversial issues at the Inquiry, but the Inspectors concluded that "as we have found no preferable alternative substitute... we have recommended their retention."

As we reported in the Autumn 2004 Newsletter, in its evidence to the Public Enquiry, Zurich/Eagle Star opposed the inclusion of a reserve MDA at Barton Farm, undoubtedly because they are only too aware that development at Barton Farm makes a new town at Micheldever even less likely. The Dever Society welcomes the continued opposition of the City Council to Zurich/Eagle Star's plans (the Local Plan Review does not include a new town at Micheldever, and it is not mentioned in the Inspectors' report).

The City Council is now considering the Inspectors' recommendations and hopes to publish modifications to the Local Plan Review in early 2006. There will then be a further period of public consultation.

Copies of the report are available from the City Council's Development Services Reception in Avalon House, Chesil Street, Winchester, SO23 0HU (£30 plus £5 p&p) and can be viewed on the City Council's website www.winchester.gov.uk

More than 200,000 south east properties planned for flood plains

A report issued in early November by MORE THAN, the direct insurance arm of Royal & SunAlliance, highlighted many concerns about future flood risk in the UK. It summarised the progress the government has made and the issues that need to be addressed so that homeowners can continue to get adequate insurance cover for flooding.

One of the key concerns in the report is that around 200,000 new properties, particularly in the South East of England, are planned in flood risk areas. In addition, the future of the Thames Barrier is uncertain. Substantial new development is planned behind the Thames Barrier, yet it was only designed to be effective until 2030. Planned new development and ageing, deteriorating defences could lead to many households and businesses being uninsurable in the future, it said.

Notice of AGM

The Dever Society Annual General Meeting will take place at Micheldever Station Community Hall on Monday 30 January 2006 at 7.30 pm.

Khalid Aziz to become Society president

Professor Khalid Aziz, LVO, DL, FRSA, will be the new President of The Dever Society. He succeeds The Lord Ashburton, KG, KCVO, DL, who has been the Society's president since the mid-Hampshire amenity group was established in 1990 to fight the threat of a new town near Micheldever.

Khalid Aziz knows the Society well, having been its Chairman from 1997 to 2000. He said: "Following Lord Ashburton will be particularly challenging. But I'm looking forward to my new role. The Dever Society has a key part to play in protecting and celebrating the Hampshire downlands and I am looking forward to seeing it go from strength to strength."



Present Chairman, Richard Cowen, said: "The Society has been greatly honoured to have had Lord Ashburton as President since Eagle Star Insurance first revealed its proposal for building a new town on its land around Micheldever Station. We shall be equally honoured to have Khalid Aziz during a period when we can be certain the threat of development will not disappear".

Khalid Aziz is chairman of executive communications consultancy The Aziz Corporation and Visiting Professor of Business Communications at Southampton University School of Management.

Events

The Society's Events Committee has, as ever, been working hard to put together a packed events programme.

The next diary date is:

Mon 12th Dec – Carols in the Barn - This popular local event is being hosted this year by James and Gill Dockray at Borough Farm, Micheldever. Doors open at 6.30 pm. There will be plenty of BBQ food, as well as mulled wine and mince pies to fortify everyone, and to keep us singing into the night. We are also expecting a visit from a jolly old gentleman who normally dresses in red.

Sat 13th May 2006- Clay Shoot - This year's main event will be a clay shoot held at Roundwood Shooting Ground, approximately 10 minutes from the A303/M3 junction and situated in the heart of the Roundwood Estate surrounded by 1700 acres of beautiful Hampshire Countryside. Roundwood offers a huge variety of 360-degree shooting with the centrepiece being a 128ft tower - an irresistible test of skill for anyone. Morning competition will be followed by a lunch and prize giving.

Membership and Area Co-ordinators

Our membership stands at over 8,000, providing the Society with a good support basis for the continuing battle against Eagle Star/Zurich.

Following our appeal in the last Spring / Summer Newsletter for more Area Co-ordinators in specific areas, we are pleased to announce that four members have generously offered their time.

They are –

Miss Avril Carmalt-Jones for Winchester – Badger Farm and St Cross

Mrs Margaret Robertson for Winchester – Hyde

Mr. Adrian Lewis for Overton

Mr. Richard Mallinson for Whitchurch

We are very appreciative of the work the Co-ordinators fulfil in monitoring the membership in their areas and for keeping an eye out for potential new members.

If anyone else is willing to help with deliveries of the Newsletter where we have not previously mentioned your area, please let us know by contacting Jacqui by telephone or e-mail - details at end of this Newsletter. Welcome packs for new members are also available from Jacqui.

Free Money

Raise money for The Dever Society just by searching the web.

EveryClick.com is an internet search engine with a big difference—it donates half its revenues to charity!

It does not cost us, or you, a penny. Now you can support The Dever Society every time you search the web.

Just make <http://www.everyclick.com/uk/thedeversociety> your home page and make sure you use it whenever you search the web!

Stone-curlews disappointing locally, but “back from the brink” nationally

Intensive efforts by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and English Nature, together with government departments and agencies and more than 150 farmers and landowners, have brought England's threatened pairs of stone-curlews to a post-war high.

Numbers of breeding stone-curlew in England have risen to more than 300 pairs, hitting a national conservation target five years ahead of schedule. A third of these - 103 pairs - were recorded in Wessex, around the core areas of Salisbury Plain and at Porton Down. The species had suffered one of the most spectacular declines of any UK breeding bird since the Second World War.

The RSPB's Wessex Stone-curlew Project Manager, Phil Sheldrake, said: 'This is a great success story. It demonstrates that collaborative working between the MoD, English Nature, Rural Development Service, DEFRA, farmers and us can produce fantastic results for our most threatened species. Our challenge now is to secure the future for stone-curlews in the UK.'

Sadly, the picture was gloomier in the Dever Valley area. Phil Sheldrake told the Society that monitoring by his team over the spring and summer reported no increase in stone-curlew numbers beyond the two pairs already known to exist in the area. Even more worrying, the eggs laid by both pairs failed to hatch. Both pairs then moved from their original nesting sites and the RSPB team were unable to locate them

again. "It is always possible that they laid further eggs and that these second nests were successful," said Phil.

The RSPB team works closely with a number of local farmers, both those on whose land the two pairs nest and others who have set up special plots to encourage further pairs to nest.

Stone-curlews are wading birds, about the size of a crow but slimmer, more elegant and with much longer wings. Their most striking features are their long yellow legs and large yellow eyes, the power of which enables them to feed on insects at night.

In England they live on dry, sparsely vegetated, open ground including farmland.

Stone-curlews used to number more than 1,000 breeding pairs in England before habitats were lost to the intensification of arable farming and forestry after the Second World War. It is one of the species most vulnerable to disturbance and its eggs and chicks are so well camouflaged that they are almost impossible to spot.

Further information: Phil Sheldrake, RSPB Wessex stone-curlew project manager 01722 427232, www.rspb.org.uk/england/southwest/farming/wessexstonecurlew.asp



Electronic Newsletter

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