

## **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT WOOLFOX** **GREAT CASTERTON PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS**

On 19th March Great Casterton Parish Council was invited to meet with John Edmond, a Property Lawyer who is a consultant to Andrew Granger & Co, the Agents for the Hill family, the Landowners and proposed developers of the Garden Village at Woolfox airfield.

At that time Great Casterton was the only Parish Council to be individually briefed on this project. Subsequently after the public briefing on the project at Victoria Hall in Oakham on 12th April Mark Bush, the Chairman of the PC was contacted by the Stamford Mercury for comment on how this development would affect the village and its residents. Other Parish Councils had declined to comment.

At its meeting the Parish Council was briefed on the current plans for a 7,500 house Garden Village, schools, shops and employment activities on the Woolfox Airfield site and the adjacent Hill owned land. We were told that the aim was to get the scheme into the evolving Rutland Plan, at the expense of the St George's development if necessary. The Agents believed that the present Rutland plan with its development concentrated on Oakham and Uppingham, along with St George's is flawed as it is not in line with the August 2018 Government Garden Communities Prospectus.<sup>1</sup> Their proposed development when completed would be a town larger than Oakham.

They strongly advocated that the Woolfox plan could meet Rutland's needs until 2036 and probably to 2050 obviating the need for further development of Oakham and Uppingham. Woolfox would offer certainty, jobs, schools, affordable housing, council housing, as well as high quality market housing. Moreover the site was in the A1 corridor and well placed within the circle of Peterborough, Grantham, Leicester and Nottingham. Any development should be part of a cross boundary working involving other local authorities. Phase 1 of the scheme for some 2500-3000 houses (more than St George's) would not entail access problems for the present A1 as it has adequate capacity. They also suggested that this phase, provided it received the necessary permissions, could commence in 2023.

Regarding transport links they also claimed that the Garden Village would be able to rely on good bus links to employment and shopping areas. This is a

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<sup>1</sup> This prospectus sets out how we can support local areas that want to create new garden communities, and the key qualities that we expect proposals to demonstrate. It offers tailored government assistance to deliver garden communities of at least 1,500 homes, with priority given to those of over 10,000 homes.

misnomer: no bus company would want to take it on without a large subsidy. Consequently employment opportunities in the Leicester/Nottingham/Grantham/Peterborough hubs would produce an over-dependence on car transport. Their suggestions on the increased use of pedestrian or cycling journeys were over optimistic too. The latest statistics available indicate that the average pedestrian journey is just 0.6 miles, and a cycle journey only 2.4 miles.

Rutland County Council has made clear that its goal is to 'reduce car dependency within the County' (page 60 Rutland's Fourth Local Transport Plan 2018-2036). The current rate of 'car dependency' in Rutland is extremely high with over 70% of all journeys (apart from travel to school) in Rutland being made by car. Evidence from the The Foundation for Integrated Transport report and from the Proposition Statement and Vision Plan for Woolfox makes it clear that this development is unlikely to do anything to help Rutland to achieve this goal. Rather, it is likely to make it harder to achieve by creating roads and junctions that are hostile to all forms of transport except the motor car.

We were also briefed on their way ahead for this scheme. Importantly a meeting with Government is planned to discuss to discuss the Garden Communities Prospectus and garner support for it. An Appraisal Report will shortly be handed to Granger's development team and when agreed it will be forwarded to RCC. A public briefing has been held and a website is up and running. A meeting with Highways England is scheduled to discuss the wider strategic A1 corridor. No details of the financing of the scheme were given and no Developers had yet been briefed.

At the end of the briefing the Parish Council gave the following comments that were also reflected in the Stamford Mercury article:

1. We were sceptical about their views on the present capacity of the A1 to cope with even phase 1 of this scheme.
2. Whilst they had taken into account the St George's development, the one at North Stamford had been to a certain extent overlooked.
3. They appeared not to have grasped the effect of the vast increase in cars and delivery vehicles that these developments would generate and the effect it could have on the County, and Great Casterton in particular. The ongoing plans for the North Stamford development means that Great Casterton would be the "meat in the sandwich" between these two developments.
4. We told them that Rutland is a rural county with pretty stone villages connected by rural roads. People come to live in Rutland for those reasons and consequently the house prices are dearer than in the surrounding Counties. They would not be happy if a large new town was built in the County, and would wonder if it was really necessary.

5. The nearest shopping town to Woolfox would be Stamford which already has a parking problem and considerable development of its own. Bus services will not solve that dilemma for the reasons stated above.
6. Consequently we declined to give our support to this scheme.

Mark Bush  
Chairman, Great Casterton Parish Council  
26th April 2019