

Corston Parish Council

Chairman: Malcolm McDowall

Clerk: John V May

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Planning Policy Team

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30th November 2009

Dear Sir/Madame,

SPATIAL OPTIONS FOR THE DISTRICT AND CORE STRATEGY

1. This letter is from Corston Parish Council.
2. The Core Strategy Spatial Options document has been discussed recently at four local meetings. Namely, the Corston Parish Council meeting on 21st October, a public meeting in Corston church with approximately 200 people present on 3rd November, a BaNES meeting in Keynsham Town Hall on 4th November and at the Environs of Bath sub Committee (The Bath Preservation Trust) meeting on 11th November 2009. The Parish Council believes that, having taken account of comments made at these meetings and the ensuing discussions, this letter accurately reflects the views of the Parishioners of Corston.
3. The Corston Parish Council formally requests that the BaNES Planning Policy team take note of the following comments and provide them to the relevant Planning Inspector at any future enquiry about this subject, whether public or otherwise. Our comments refer, in particular to Option 3A of the Core Strategy Summary: "New neighbourhood in an urban extension to Bath."
 - a) This is a Core Strategy consultation document but it gives the distinct impression that the adoption of Option 3A is a foregone conclusion and that it will be approved without taking account of views received through the consultation process.

b) In the present economic climate it is not possible to finalise a relationship between inward migration to the Bath area, the numbers of new homes needed and employment prospects or growth. The United Kingdom remains in the grip of a serious recession with unemployment still rising. The proposed Core Strategy is based on pre-recession data, including financial forecasts and potential employment growth figures. Because of this, the recommendations contained in the consultation document are considered to be critically flawed. Any responsible Council basing their Vision and Objectives for the next 20 years on the assumptions contained in this document would be totally negligent and show scant regard to prudent and responsible management of their Public Finances.

c) The Government housing projections and targets are overstated, simplified and have an unrealistic political bias.

d) To make the best economic use of existing infrastructure and facilities and avoid increasing congestion on roads that already exceed their capacity at peak times, Bath's Urban Extension should not be concentrated in a single geographical centre. If the need is proved, any development should be dispersed. Areas to the North and East of Bath should be developed in addition to smaller sites, yet to be identified, to the South and West of the City. Local village communities are dying because of the regular closure of shops, schools, and public houses etc. A better thought out distribution of new housing across the whole of the County would doubtless help to regenerate our villages and towns to the benefit of the wider community.

e) Affordable and Social Housing should not be concentrated in any one area for obvious reasons. The cost effectiveness argument for this approach, put forward by Developers, should not be the defining reason for decision making on this scale of wide reaching and long term development.

4. Comments relating specifically to the locations affected by Option 3A

The Concept

a) The preferred option SWB1, a proposed development buffering Newton St Loe village cannot realistically be depicted as Urban Development. It will not be well linked to the City and will not integrate or connect well to the existing neighbourhood of Twerton. More accurately, this proposal is the development of a new dormitory village of West Twerton. This concept is unacceptable as it reduces the Green Belt and disfigures one of the most attractive routes into a World Heritage Site. Also the promise of a mixed development that brings new housing, industry and retail together on a single site is considered an unacceptable step back in time for urban development, more reminiscent of the Industrial Revolution than the 21st Century.

b) If BaNES are seriously committed to realistic Urban Development, and are prepared to not give in to pressure from the Duchy's estate to create a new dormitory village of West Twerton, then the only viable alternative development option for extending the City's boundary in South West Bath is at Odd Down. Corston Parish Council's preferred option is for a greater number of smaller housing developments throughout the area, but if this is not acceptable to BaNES and the Council wish to proceed with a housing development at a single location BaNES is urgently requested to reconsider their position and make Odd Down the Council's preferred option.

The Setting

- c) The area is good productive farmland in the Green Belt and it should be efficiently used to grow more food.
- d) The Avon Valley around Corston, Newton St Loe, Kelston, Newbridge and Saltford is an area of outstanding beautiful natural scenery and the planned urban expansion would tragically despoil it for us and future generations.
- e) The area is adjacent to two main approaches, (the A4 and A39), into Bath which are already incapable of coping with current levels of traffic flow and the increase created by housing development will make the situation even more chaotic. Most importantly any development as proposed to the West of Twerton would ruin a delightful and beautiful historic entry route into a World Heritage Site and drastically reduce the City of Bath's status as a prestigious World Heritage destination.
- f) The geographical area of the proposed housing development site is unsuitable for such intense housing. The hill has a very pronounced slope and the lower northern ground floods after heavy rain. However the major issue with this location is that the whole area is undermined and riddled with 18th and 19th century coal mine excavations. The Newton coal mine tunnelled under this particular area for over one hundred years before it closed in 1846. The Bath area has already spent a considerable figure stabilising old underground stone quarry workings at Combe Down. This predicament should not be repeated at Newton St Loe.
- g) There are many Brown Field sites in Bath, including some occupied by the Ministry of Defence, which should be considered for housing development in line with Government policy. This clearly makes sense as such locations already have community infrastructures in place and would create extra jobs and stimulate the areas. Such development would not create extra traffic flow into and out of Bath at peak times and thus not increase carbon emissions, which is another Government and worldwide objective to combat the concern about global warming.

5. Conclusion

Corston Parish Council considers that many of the objectives in the Core Strategy document are founded on flawed assumptions, contradictory and illogical and therefore unworthy of implementation. In conclusion, Corston Parish Council fundamentally objects to proposals outlined in the Core Strategy Option 3A and believes that without further detailed work to identify alternative sites for development to the North and East of Bath, it would be financially and democratically irresponsible of the Council to progress on the basis of the current proposals.

Yours faithfully

Malcolm J McDowall

Chairman of Corston Parish Council

Distribution: (via email where possible)

BaNES , Planning Policy Team

Corston Parish Councillors

Mrs S Davis, District Councillor

Newton Saint Loe Parish Council

Newton St Loe Conservation Group

Saltford Parish Council

Combe Hay Parish Council

Farmborough Parish Council

Keynsham Town Council

The Duchy of Cornwall, Buckingham Gate, SW1

N Mould, The Manager, Duchy of Cornwall, Newton St Loe

The Rt Hon Lord Adonis, The Secretary of State for Transport

The Hon John J Denham, The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

D Norris, Labour MP for Keynsham

J Rees-Mogg, prospective Conservative MP for Keynsham

The Bath Chronicle

The Bath Preservation Trust

The Campaign to Protect Rural England

The South West Local Government Association

The Week, (Keynsham's local newspaper)

English Heritage, (South West Office)

Mrs E Acton, Chairwoman, The Buzz Club, Corston

Mr & Mrs J Bowden, Bury View Farm, Corston Fields

Mrs M Brown, Corston Lane

Mrs J Burton, Chairwoman, Corston Village Hall Committee

Mrs S Charles, Cottonmead, Corston

Reverend R Hall, Saltford

R Hellard, Pack Horse Cottage, South Stoke

C Hignett, Manor Farm, South Stoke

S Josef, The Manager, St Teresa's Nursing Home, Corston

M Lee, The Chairman, Lower Barton Residents Association Ltd, Corston

M Lippiatt, Ashton Hill, Corston

T Miller, The Editor, The "Corstonian", Corston

M Seymour, Wells Road, Corston

M Seymour, Corston Lane, Corston

Corston Village Post Office

Corston Parish Council notice-board