

From: Gordon Bambridge <sgbjays@aol.com>
Date: 20 July 2018 at 13:19:57 BST
To: <Gordon.Bambridge@breckland.gov.uk>

Report on the proposed New Town,

This is primarily to the six villages who attended the meeting on Wednesday evening in North Elmham. Two of which I have represented for 16 years , three for 4 years and one who is affected but from another Breckland Ward, I have therefore copied those members into this mail, plus other interested parties. All of these are detailed above.

If you wish to pass it on to others, or reproduce it whole or quoted from in in your own emails or parish magazines please feel free to do so. I would however prefer that as the matter is so complex that it is passed on whole. I am happy to discuss.

I will seek to reach some conclusions at the end of this note, but I do want to make my position clear. Whilst I am your elected representative, and not a delegate, I have always and will always seek to ensure that the views and positions of the villages in my ward are heard within Breckland, and also into the wider political community. On this issue I remain undecided, or at least undeclared because I feel it is my position as your representative to examine fully, and listen to all sides of any argument, then to report to you and listen to what you say. I have started this process on Wednesday and Thursday. I hope to report verbally to you within the context of your next round of parish meetings, but if you wish I will attend special meetings within any parish in my ward, or any joint meetings such as last Wednesday that you wish to call.

It seems to me that the whole matter is still just a dream of some individuals, but that does not alter the fact that in planning terms this is by far the largest proposal made in recent times within Norfolk, let alone Breckland and our ward.

During the last 48 hours I have attended three meetings on this matter. Your meeting on Wednesday evening. A meeting with four representatives of the proposed development on Thursday morning and Breckland members on Thursday evening. In between I consulted with Breckland officers and senior members to establish legalities and extent of prior knowledge

THE ELMHAM MEETING:

Thank you for inviting me, and for the turnout from all the main affected villages. It was really helpful to me to hear the points of view you raised, and I was impressed that the attitude was not a NIMBY one although it is definitely really 'in your back yard.' I took notes of your views, as you know, and challenged Lanpro and the three proposers at my meeting with those comments.

Of course at that stage we all knew virtually nothing except that a proposal was being mooted and from a map you had where it was. As I said above I am happy to come back to you now in any format.

It would be easy for me to come out in opposition now, but I do feel that this matter is more important than a knee jerk reaction and will therefore consider it until and if a plan is produced for us all to consider.

THE SITE MEETING:-

Whilst it is hard to believe that at this stage they do not have them. I did not see any form of plan or paper details of the proposal, so I have to report as though it is still a dream in the eye of the proposers. I did however spend some two and half hours on the site and listening to their concepts of the new settlement. What I can conclude from that is below, but I did press them strongly that they give a presentation to you, the local parish representatives at least, their scheme as they had presented to me. These are 'facts' I discerned from my meeting:-

It will be a Garden Town/Village or a Garden Community. These are specific descriptions and as of now I am unsure which.

It will be self contained, ie houses, shops, jobs.

It will be accessed by rail from both Elmham and County School stations via an integrated free transport system serving the entire development.

It will be accessed by road along the A1067 by a new roundabout., This is 12 minutes in normal traffic from the NDR or Broadland North-way. I raised the pinch points, and pointed out the road limits through Taverham and Drayton substantially lengthened any Norwich Journey

The Forest land and the substantial trees will all be retained, as will a 'parkland' area along the river Wensum border and other small wooded areas and most hedge lines. There will also be a clear parkland buffer facing Bintree and Billingford.

The main roads through the site will be mainly along the existing trackways

The geographic contours of the land ensure that apart from the houses on the plot the only oversight to or from dwellings will be those opposite the church in Bintree. The built development will be hidden from the built area of Billingford and most of Elmham.

The Land is (almost) all within the parishes of Bintree and Billingford.

The whole settlement will be served by ultra fast broadband enabling high tech business and industry/workers to live and work there.

They have confirmed access to power, water and sewage facilities

The whole gamut of infrastructure will be in place before housing development takes place. This includes at least one of the primary schools and the secondary school, the medical facility and other community requirements.

Because most of the buildings which will be proposed are modular, the actual construction will be relatively fast and clean. It is envisioned that specialist workers will live with families on the site for the duration of the development (circa 25 years). manufacture could also take place on site.

There will be a housing mix

Whilst still in the conceptual stage(?) this appears to have the support of Westminster and MP's.

Also several departments of state have been consulted including housing, transport, environment and so on

This has all been revealed somewhat earlier than intended because of the government setting new limits to applications for such developments.

It is though that nationally there are approaching twenty proposals in the pipeline and this has a high rating. When they are assessed and if they are shortlisted then government help in refining and producing the schemes are available.

This is regarded as one of the very few that are true stand alone proposals and the first of it's type in over 100 years. This is mainly because the land acquisition is completed (although some small areas may be added later) and the money to drive the scheme is also in place and is long term committed which means that the very substantial sums needed in infrastructure can be made up front. This amounts to £230m on details I challenged on.

I expressed no opinion to them on support or opposition.

I commended to them that they approach you as soon as possible.

They appeared to be open and responsive

THE BRECKLAND MEETING-

This was a private and not a public meeting.

As a council we are unable to make council wide decisions in a non public meeting but it does allow for frank exchanges to take place.

In response to your specific requests.

The Leader William Nunn (I believe some have already written to him) will be replying to the request you all know about after further consideration and advice.

This is different from the Local Plan in that until this month we as a council were unaware of a proposal coming, and indeed we still have no proposal to even consider. You cannot conclude on an abstract idea.

I hope later I will be able to copy you the Breckland Leaders response as it will become a public document as soon as it is written.

MY CONCLUSIONS:-

My first conclusion is that I have none, and indeed cannot until we know whether this plan is placed before government in the call for sites.

Lanpro should certainly approach the local communities to explain just what they are doing. In some ways by talking to Bill Borrett and I they may say that they have done that, but I believe that a parish council briefing and followed by public meeting should take place. This may be earlier than they had hoped, but they are where they are and this should be done promptly, and I will tell them that.

Breckland should press for more details from both Lanpro and government on any proposal, but have difficulty until such proposals are made.

You, the affected villages, should of course press for more detail, and probably object to 10,000 new homes within your parishes. The development is within Bintree and Billingford in terms of land, but....

....It will directly affect all the surrounding communities to the North and East along the A1067 to both Fakenham and Norwich. This includes Foxley, Bylaugh and Bawdeswell as the nearest, but also Sparham and Lyng in my ward South, and Guist and Twyford in my ward North. It will also affect all the villages along the B1145 including Brisley and Elmham in my ward. To a lesser extent the villages of Hockering, North Tuddenham and Elsing within the ward and on the A47 corridor whom I will also brief on this matter

I have always believed in hearing both sides of any argument before taking sides, and this will apply here.

You will all know I have an additional responsibility within Breckland for Planning and Growth. This would normally, in a situation like this, give me problems of loyalty.

I have however spoken to William Nunn and evoked a long established practice within the conservative party in Breckland that when a matter of specific concern within a village, or ward as here, arises I am free of any party or council commitment on that issue.

It does not of course alter how I think, but it does free me to fully represent you in this matter without regard to outside pressures or indeed any movement within Breckland.

This commitment is not diluted by my meeting this week, or indeed any future meetings with Lanpro and I am happy to discuss this with you at any time. I remain your representative.

Best regards,

Gordon

between writing and proof reading this I have seen the Breckland response, relevant portions are here. This is an officer response pending clarification for the council to respond' Any council response will be when we have the additional clarifications.

“As already explained Breckland Council as the local planning authority have only in the last month been made aware of your proposal, and as yet have not had time to consider this formally through our council processes. In the meantime this is an officer response based on our current understanding of your proposal and the position the council is in through its own local plan making.

Before giving an opinion the Council must be certain that any proposal represents a sustainable option for growth and that there are mechanisms to fund and deliver the infrastructure needed to support such bespoke expansion. Most significantly, there should be full and extensive public engagement from the outset, with parishes, community groups, and businesses to gain support and understanding. This needs to be led and supported by the promoters. “