

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT IWADE VILLAGE HALL

ON MONDAY 25TH JULY, 2011

TO DISCUSS SWALE BOROUGH COUNCIL'S
'PICK YOUR OWN' CORE STRATEGY

PRESENT:

Cllr. S. Plum – Chairman Iwade P.C.

Cllr. J. White – Iwade P.C.

Cllr. J. Gregory – Iwade P.C.

Cllr. R. Phillips – Iwade P.C.

Cllr. J. Hunt – Iwade P.C.

Cllr. T. Mould – Newington P.C.

Cllr. A. Hudson – Bapchild P.C.

Cllr. P. Paige – Borden P.C./KALC

Cllr. M. Baldock – Borden P.C.

Cllr. G. Herbert – Bobbing P.C.

Cllr. B. Willis – Bredgar P.C.

Cllr. M. Brown – Eastchurch P.C.

Cllr. P. Blandon – Hartlip P.C./CPRE

Cllr. K. Ingleton – Minster-on-Sea P.C.

Cllr. W. Wood – Teynham & Tonge P.C.

Chris McIlroy – Clerk Teynham P.C

County Councillor M. Whiting

Brian Lloyd - CPRE

Lynda Fisher – Clerk Iwade P.C

3 Residents

Iwade Parish Council hosted the meeting and the Chairman, Cllr. Stephen Plumb, welcomed the attendees.

The meeting was called to look at further development on Swale Borough Council's Strategy, This will form the planning basis for the next 20 years and there is concern as to how this will shape the future of Swale. A number of Parish Councils to the east of Sittingbourne joined together to respond to the strategy and were welcomed to the meeting. Brian Lloyd, from the Campaign to Protect of Rural England (CPRE), was in attendance and was willing to share his views/insights on this subject and look at how Parishes can continue to respond even though the consultation process has been completed - it is not a shut book.

Even though those present were aware of the four options, Cllr. Plumb briefly re-outlined them. Swale Borough Council's Local Development Framework Committee meets on the 4th August and a report is already available on the website. The report seems to indicate that Option 4 is being deemed as unrealistic.

Cllr. Plumb invited Brian Lloyd to take the floor and address the meeting. Brian thanked Iwade Parish Council for inviting him and for taking the initiative to bring together the Parish Councils to look at the Strategy, as it will have far reaching impacts and sets the framework for the next 20 years.

He stated that CPRE made a detail response to the consultation, which basically stated that the organisation cannot support any of the options. All four options raise infrastructure, housing and employment issues. The over all aim is to create a substantial development and in all four options

this was not met. All four options rely on new road building, e.g. the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road (SNRR) and the Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road (SSRR). There are issues on the East side of Sittingbourne as a consequence of completing the SNRR this will create a big amount of new traffic and the documents do not say how this point will be mitigated. Another issue not adequately addressed is Junction 5 on the M2 – there are no proposals to do anything about improving the junction – this should be top of the list to be addressed.

The housing figures stated in Options 1 to 3 are essentially a copy of the South East Plan figure (the present Government has criticised this plan) and seems as though the SEP has been used as a starting point.

Regarding employment, Options 1 and 2 are low growth, with Options 3 and 4 higher, but in the CRPE's analysis all are very high growth. There is a mismatch between housing and job planning; this could lead to commuting or jobs not materialising.

In its response CPRE presented an alternative Option; at the top of the list are infrastructure improvements, e.g. Junction 5. SNRR –middle section not completed at the moment; led to town centre regeneration and takes time to assess traffic.

Consideration should be given to local housing number more in line with the recommendations that came out of the South East Plan examination. Their figure was then increased by the Secretary of State, but now needs to go back to the South East Plan figure.

The CPRE fully supports Option 1 to re-focus on regeneration in Sittingbourne, Queenborough and Rushenden and look at potential building on the edges and villages. Employment should be limited to the existing employment sites CPRE also supported in principle the regeneration of Sheerness Port, to be looked at not individually but in more detail at a later stage.

The document that goes to Swale Council's LDF Committee on the 4th August is an initial report to get Councillors looking at the facts collected in light of the consultation. A decision will be made on the 15th December and then consultation on this is open until the early part of next year. Beyond the plan making stage will be peoples' chance to make representation. This is the stage where faults can be found and when the Inspector looks at it he could find it unsound.

Representatives from the attending Parishes then put forward the following comments/criticisms:

- One of the issues is the way it was put into Options, this pits one part of the Borough against another.
- The Options were flawed; figures don't add up, are unrealistic and need to be re-checked.
- None of the Options were pleasing to all people
- Concern at the amount of proposed housing
- Employment has fallen but housing continues to rise
- Jobs are being created in London, Medway and Ebbsfleet, but not locally, where are the extra jobs coming from?
- Housing and jobs projections do not add up.
- People are not aware that this consultation has gone ahead and are not aware of the implications
- The need, during the summer months, to make as many people as possible aware of this Strategy and its implications.
- The need for Swale Borough Council to come up with a more realistic Option.

- Concern that the report for the LDF Committee states that the outcome of the consultation is inconclusive, but comments on the consultation portal are very to the point. If you read the comments there is a huge amount of feedback on housing, transport and the Kent Science Park. The remark 'inconclusive' undermines those people that made comments and their views should not be written off.
- Parish Councils are fed up with being written off as 'localist lobby groups'
- Options 3 and 4 are identical, but different time frames.
- Swale Councillors are out of touch with what the electorate actually want; they should work for us and not for themselves
- The planning process is not based on need; the whole process seems to be based around willing land owners and builders who want to develop on their land.
- If you look at where houses are going it is where owners have come forward; other areas have been disregarded and been ignored even when the infrastructure has been there to support development
- Traffic from any new proposals in the Newington area will have to feed onto the A2 which is already congested. Pollution levels are above what is recommended and the proposals will be on a Greenfield site.
- Villages might not be affected by this Strategy, but that does not mean that they will not be in any future stages.
- Swale Council needs to ensure every household gets details; not just post something on their website.

Action to be taken by Parish Councils:

- Find a suitable way to bring the Options to the attentions of Parishioners and set out strategies to get the information out to every community
- Infrastructure – go to service providers direct to ascertain current situation.
- Investigate using Swale B.C's mobile display stand (Bredgar created their own stands and pointed out the various Options)
- Cllr. Baldock agreed to draft a circular for consideration by Parish Councils. It is hoped to set up a working group to agree the leaflet and then git it out to parishioners.
- Investigate bringing in experts to assist.
- Brian Lloyd offered the assistance of CPRE (the document submitted by them is available to Parish Councils)
- Look to lobbying our Borough Council Members and Planning officers.

Next Meeting:

Members agreed to hold a further meeting in two weeks time; Iwade volunteered to host this.