

District Councillor Ian Houlder – Report October 2019

I know there is a lot of interest in and around the Barrow Ward about future plans for additional housing and infrastructure in West Suffolk. The link below will give you and residents access to much information about the process going forward, there is included a Local Development Scheme(LDS) timeline which gives important dates or milestones. Needless to say as the process moves forward into next and subsequent years there may be slippage. It is a complex process .Please pass on this information through your local website(s), Newsletters or notice boards.

A 'Call for Sites' went out to landowners throughout West Suffolk last year, closing in December 2018.

Locally, those I have been informed about but not publically published are up to seven parcels in Barrow village, the existing Westley allocation in a previous local plan and the Tear Drop Site (A14/Newmarket Road – Junction 40). One landowner and one developer have come forward to Barrow PC to present their views on what they would like to do on the sites in the village. They have put forward two down Barrow Hill either side of the road and on the large fields behind and down from Dale Tree Close to Burthorpe.

It must be stressed that none of these parcels, as yet, have been considered acceptable or not acceptable to the West Suffolk planners and until they are announced nothing the applicants have said or done locally will be of any weight in the planning process. When the planners have decided what they consider possible sites for consideration (across the whole of West Suffolk) a thorough public consultation will be undertaken (by West Suffolk Council NOT the potential developers). Many sites will be rejected at this stage either completely or in part. The fact they are privileged to be included in the consultation does not mean they will, either all or in part, be successful. Sites may be vehemently and justifiably opposed, have many constraints against them, be in inappropriate/unsustainable locations – the list is long, hence a thorough consultation where local knowledge and infrastructure constraints* are very important.

This process will be undertaken from approximately November and into January 2020. The West Suffolk Council will formally agree the sites for consultation in December 2019

Later when the consultations are complete and studied in depth the Planners will make and publish their preferred options and approach to them. Sites will be rejected at this stage too. This anticipated from August to October 2020.

Successful applicants **will then have to consult locally** on their outline plans for the allocated sites, all and any observations made at this stage

will be considered by the Inspector. This process is anticipated to complete by April/May 2021

There are several additional steps through 2021, 2022 and 2023

A bit of background

Central Government decides the 'need' for housing and other buildings and advises every local authority of the numbers of houses they must provide. West Suffolk District Council have been advised that between 2019 and 2041 they should prepare to take 816 per annum over this 22 year period = 17,952. However they require a plan for a 20% overage, 21,542. This target is reviewed every two years and will probably change (upwards for this growing region).

Fortunately West Suffolk DC already have 15,300 homes in the system either being built or have planning permission but this still means making plans for around 6,000 extra homes in West Suffolk over the next 22 years.

We are also fortunate that currently we have a land supply for housing need in excess of six years, where we must have a minimum of five years. Once again this '5 year supply' is reviewed regularly. Developers, as a default, always erroneously claim the District Council does not have a 5 year supply, so we prove it using outside professionals. This is one of the many reasons to have a Local Plan, it allows Councils to control and direct the growth, stop speculative housing development not agreed in the Local Plan and importantly allows the existing local populations to have their say. Their voices would be helped very much with an individual Neighbourhood Plan (Barrow has started on theirs).

Barrow is designated as a Key Service Centre, Westley & Saxhams largely as Countryside. These designations are now longer to be set in stone and local residents or PCs can use the consultations to change/add/delete designations. For instance communities with no settlement boundaries, usually classified as Countryside, have many planning policies set against development or building almost any new housing, others are classed of not having enough amenities or infrastructure and are classed as unsustainable. Such restrictions can be harmful small outposts and hamlets whilst larger villages similarly restricted cannot grow to encourage the amenities they would like to set up a service in their community, this could be a bus service, doctors surgery, infants school, local shop etc.

Anyone can comment about any of the sites chosen. The fact that the Saxhams probably have none does not mean they will not be affected by growth in Barrow or Westley and further afield in, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, Fornhams ,Risby, Kentford etc.

Interesting times.

I will keep all informed about the Public Consultation in January next year and try to ensure all residents have a chance to make their points known, particularly those with no access to a computer, as these forms will be online but hard copies will be available. I am told a consultation form from a Parish Council counts as one, so, a good idea for every PC Member to fill one in individually and spread the word!

*Constraints – a really long list some carrying more weight than others (this is not exhaustive):-

Capacity, Water & utility supplies supply, drainage, sewerage, proximity to ancient monuments & Listed Buildings, flood plain/flooding zones, inadequate road infrastructure, lack of local amenities including bus links, lack of health provision, lack of school places, protected land, park and woodland, protected species, SSI's (by Natural England) known hazards such as chemical storage areas underground strategic pipe lines, HM Forces, National Strategic, RAF & USAAF restrictions etc.

http://devwestsuffolk/planning/Planning_Policies/supportinginformation.cfm

Best wishes, Ian