

MARRANEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

No 2/11

MUNDHAM AND RUNCTON

The Chairman writes...

L.D.F. Housing proposals

You may be aware that the District Council, through the forthcoming Local Development Framework, is proposing massive housing developments of several thousand houses in the District, particularly in the southern half which of course includes us. Centred on 'sustainable hubs' near or at medium to large established settlements, it seems the thinking is that the established shops and other facilities will serve the great influx of population. Chichester City, Tangmere, East Wittering & Bracklesham, Selsey and Southbourne, have all been identified as possible 'hubs' for much of the development. Please note our parish area does not seem to be so specified, as yet.

I believe we have some arguments against housing in our area in that the papers produced by the CDC state that development should not take place in our villages outside SPAs (Settlement Policy Areas) and such areas within North Mundham and Runcton are almost totally used up. Additionally, constraints such as flood risk, lack of facilities e.g. surgeries or shops, inadequate infrastructure, particularly roads and sewerage, and landscape protection should be taken into account. I would say all these apply to our parish.

The housing numbers proposed derive from the S.E. Regional Planning Authority (now defunct) in 2004 and it remains to be seen how much the CDC

will feel obliged to follow these essentially government guide lines.

There has now been a 'public consultation' on housing. This was a tick-box questionnaire available primarily online and access to it defeated nearly everyone particularly when they had to complete registration to be able voice their democratic opinions. The options to choose from were farcical and the personal opinion box attached for your opinion not catered for by the options will, in all likelihood, I am afraid, be binned. The purpose of this device is firstly to make you believe (wrongly) someone is going to seriously consider your words and secondly to permit the CDC to say they have given you the opportunity to express an opinion at variance with the tick boxes. The result of all this as some may have seen in the Observer is that a few days before the deadline just 22 replies had been received online. Some public consultation!

It makes one wonder how many of the 22 responses are from the large vested interests who see the vast profits to be made particularly by large national developers who we know have options on local land always in the hope of planning permission being granted. There is understandably huge pressure from these interests to make very substantial financial gains, and see the preparation of the new LDF as a great opportunity

A transcript of the letter sent on behalf of MARRA to the Chichester Observer on this subject and published on 29th September, is set out below and gives some further significant aspects for consideration.

Please feel free to write comments on this to MARRANEWS (to the editor – Tony Atkins, The Firs, Brookside Close, Runcton or via e-mail to anthatkins@waitrose.com) for possible publication later and also contact, if you wish, the Chichester District Council and the Observer newspaper. Either by design or incompetence this hugely important subject with profound effects on us all has had far too little public exposure and debate.

Mark Neave, Chairman

Letter to Chichester Observer

NO HOUSING SHORTAGE.

Why is the District Council in their LDF housing consultation questionnaire offering a choice of options so unrelated to the facts?

The consultants DTZ, appointed directly by the District Council, state clearly that any increase in local population figures until 2031 will be due entirely to people moving into the District, mostly from London. So the new housing would be for them. Without this predicted inflow and with our local ageing population DTZ state that the District population would actually decrease by some 200 per year freeing up some 100 houses annually.

There is therefore NO LOCAL HOUSING shortage, whilst the need for some form of affordable housing is accepted. Where then is the zero housing option on the questionnaire?

The abolition of The South East Plan and the enactment of the Localism Bill is a perfect opportunity for the District Council to totally revisit the local planning issue, as housing targets will now fall to local authorities in conjunction with Parish Councils.

Firstly, the old housing targets which we now have are from the 2004 era conjured up by the now defunct The South East Plan and should be scrapped. Secondly, a new consultation, public and user friendly this time please, would give a democratic voice to all the public as to what they really want in housing terms.

The zero choice for future housing would halt the paralysing effect even more houses, people and vehicles is having on our already overburdened totally inadequate and poorly maintained road system. It would also avoid the massive public expense on medical facilities, welfare facilities, schooling, civil engineering works on infrastructure on roads, drainage and sewerage and flood prevention measures.

The presently proposed housing figures will, unsurprisingly, be warmly welcomed by those with a financial interest; land owners, large builders, speculators and those dealing in property. There is no discernible advantage to the thousands who live in this area and certainly not a need for more housing. Those who already live here would suffer the disadvantages of congestion, noise and a damaged rural landscape.

People come first.

LDF - Runcton Horticultural Development Area (HDA)

In preparation for consultation on the area planning arrangements in the District Council's Local Development Framework, on the suggestion of John Hole, the MARRA Committee has been considering its position over the Horticultural Development Area and its views are set out below as a basis for consultation. In the first instance the Committee has asked the Parish Council to consider its position and the Committee would also be interested to receive comments from members. The hope is that an agreed position can be found in good time before a response has to be made to the District Council about the Area proposals in the new Local Development Framework.

Background and MARRA proposal

The HDA was set up under the District Local Plan adopted in 1999 as an attempt to solve problems that had arisen over the proliferation of planning applications for glasshouses across the county with the aim to concentrate glasshouses within certain specific areas where proposed new developments would be fairly certain to be approved. Policy RE11A in the Plan described the type of development that would be permitted on an HDA – this included the phrase 'commercial horticultural development including glasshouses and packhouses' without defining what was meant by commercial horticultural development or a packhouse.

A comparison of what has happened with the objective outlined above shows that not only have there been no new glasshouse developments on the HDA over the past ten years, other than extensions to existing units, but the loose wording of Policy RE11A has

allowed large scale, semi-industrial units to be built as packhouses for which the bulk of the produce handled is not grown in the immediate locality. These factory size units provide collection, packing and distribution facilities for horticultural produce but without the HDA would almost certainly not have been permitted on high grade agricultural land.

Changes in the commercial horticultural industry that have occurred since 1996 such as the move to growing lettuce in large quantities in open fields rather than under glass, the direct selling from grower to supermarket of most produce and the collapse of the glasshouse production of flowers in the UK, have resulted in the glasshouse industry now being confined to a small number of very large operations. However, the cost of land has now made glasshouse development on the Runcton HDA uneconomic.

It is the MARRA Committee's view that the concept of the HDA has failed and the opportunity provided by the preparation of the Local Development Framework should be taken to seek its abolition. The land presently designated as an HDA could revert to land subject to the planning constraints currently set out in Policy RE11B but, in any case, this would need to be redrafted to define more clearly what horticultural development is acceptable in open countryside.

Annual General Meeting

A well attended Annual General Meeting was held on 23rd March in the Village Hall. For the benefit of those who were unable to attend, and as a record for the future, the key points from the meeting are set out below.

Chairman's report

The chairman prefaced his report by expressing his disappointment with the poor response he felt the various authorities MARRA had been dealing with had given. He acknowledged the difficulties caused by the recession but it was very disappointing the suggestions such as placing traffic lights at the Bognor Road/A27 roundabout to help control the flow of traffic and make it less hazardous for those leaving Vinnetrow Road would not even be considered. It seems that no upgrading of the A27 will take place for at least ten years leaving the very dangerous situation at the top of Vinnetrow Road to persist.

Another matter that was moving very slowly was progress towards a new draft Core Strategy for the Local Development Framework. The District Council has identified possible areas for housing development but issues such as the congestion on the A27 around Chichester and the capacity of the local sewage works remain unresolved.

A27 – Chichester by-pass

Chris Page reported on a meeting between a group of MARRA members and two representatives of the National Highways Authority about the Chichester by-pass. The meeting had been set up to try to find out whether there were any plans for improvements to this section of the A27 in the immediate future. In addition, MARRA wished to raise a number of concerns about this road on behalf of the residents of the villages and make some suggestions for inclusion in the maintenance programme or a future upgrade.

The National Highways Authority representatives informed the meeting that following the change of

government the previous major roadworks programme had been suspended and currently there was only money available for maintenance. They did not know when a major programme would be reinstated.

MARRA's questions/issues with the NHA responses were:

1. Could lights be installed at the Bognor Road roundabout to improve access from Vinnetrow Road and make using the roundabout less hazardous?

Response - The Highways Authority is not keen to install traffic lights on main roads.

2. In the longer term will a flyover be constructed to take the A27 over the Bognor Road roundabout?

Response – Unlikely in the medium term. A filter road access to the A27 from Vinnetrow Road was a possibility.

3. What is the position over the pedestrian/cycleway bridge which has been proposed for the Whyke Road roundabout?

Response – This has been put on hold as a result of the comprehensive spending review.

4. What can be done to reduce the instances of flooding on the Chichester by-pass?

Response – The Highways Authority is aware of the problem but there is no easy solution. In reality the road surface should have been built about one metre higher over the affected stretches.

Local Development Framework

Denia Turnbull gave an update on the progress being made by the District Council on the preparation of a new local Plan. Currently a draft Core Strategy was being drawn up which would set out the Council's proposals for housing. Public consultation on this would be until the end of the summer. The aim was for the Core Strategy to be in place sometime in 2012.

As far as the Parish was concerned the principal issue was the proposal to build some more affordable housing in one of the villages, probably North Mundham.

Treasurer's Report

Paul Jarvis, the honorary treasurer, reported that 166 households were currently members. There was a balance in the Association's General Fund of £762.99 after payments for the printing of the Newsletter and the Welcome Pack and the Committee recommended that no subscription should be sought from members this year. This was agreed.

There was also £321.78 remaining in the special fund set up to cover costs incurred in fighting the erection of an anaerobic digester on the Chichester Food Park. It was agreed that this fund should be retained as a fighting fund for future issues.

Committee for 2011/2012

The existing committee members were re-elected with the exception of Vicky Santos Roe who was standing down because of other commitments. The committee members elected for 2011/2012 were:- Mark Neave, Tony Atkins, John Hole, Paul Jarvis, Chris Page, Alan Rees and Denia Turnbull.

North Mundham Pavilion Extension

Roland Higgins reported that a revised, somewhat smaller scheme, for the redevelopment of North Mundham pavilion had been prepared. The estimate for the original scheme was more than could be realistically raised in the current financial climate but the Fundraising Committee was confident that the £169,000 budget for the revised scheme could be raised.

Other matters

Flooding and sewer surcharging

In the last MARRANEWS it was reported that Southern Water would be bringing forward its regular heavy jetting programme for the sewer lines in North Mundham and Runcton to try to improve the flow and minimise surcharging and flooding at times of heavy rain. This was done but with the dry spring and relatively dry summer there has not been a problem during the past few months.

The house in School Lane which has experienced backing up from the main sewer at times of heavy rain has had a non-return valve and pump fitted to its sewer feeder line by Southern Water following further pressure by MARRA. We are awaiting a period of heavy rain to check that this has solved the long standing problem but are hopeful.

Affordable housing

As reported in the last MARRANEWS and at the AGM, Hyde Martlet has proposed building some more affordable homes in the parish. Currently the Parish Council Working Group is investigating several possible sites within the village as the first step in progressing the project.

A safe crossing at the Walnut Tree roundabout

For some time a group of mainly Runcton residents has been campaigning for a safe crossing for pedestrians at the Walnut Tree roundabout. The group has now submitted a petition to the County Council with 509 signatures (combined paper and electronic) seeking action on this very dangerous roundabout. Anyone who has had to cross from the north end of Mill Lane to the path along Lagness Road heading to North Mundham will be familiar with the risks involved.

Although up till now the County Council has been unable/unwilling to investigate a solution there is now an opportunity to press the need for action with the County Local Committee for South Chichester considering priorities for inclusion in the next County Infrastructure Plan. A public meeting will be held at County Hall in Tuesday 1st November when the members of the group will present the petition and take questions on the need for action at this junction. The Campaign Team would be very pleased for support from residents in the villages at this meeting.

North Mundham Pavilion Extension and Renovation Project

We have reported several times in MARRANEWS on the plans to enlarge and renovate the pavilion on the playing field. John Rosewarne, the Playing Field Association Chairman, has given the following encouraging update on progress.

He writes: 'Local fundraising this year has been quite spectacular. We are confident that we will be able to complete the project in time for whatever celebrations are organised for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee next year. Any contributions to the Funding would be much appreciated.

Many will remember Harold and Nobby Godfrey who did so much in the early years of the Playing Field. Their relatives have donated two beautiful benches in their memory which will be incorporated in the project in due course.'

Pagham Harbour Local Nature Reserve

We have been keeping residents up to date with the proposal by the County Council to transfer the management of Pagham Harbour Nature Reserve to the RSPB. The original aim was to complete negotiations so that a contract for the transfer of the Reserve's management to

the RSPB could be drawn up for a target date for implementation of 1st April 2011. This timetable has slipped as the details of the transfer took longer to resolve than had been expected. However, we are now in the final stages and the transfer will be completed during the autumn.

One of the main issues that had to be resolved was the future role of the County Council in the running of the reserve. After extensive negotiations and consultations it has been agreed that there will be a 10-year partnering agreement with the RSPB with the County Council taking an executive role. The County Council has guaranteed an annual payment for the duration of the agreement to help support the reserve's management and will also be making a capital investment of £100,000 over four years which will be matched by the RSPB. These funds will help towards the much needed work on the buildings and infrastructure of the site.

Although not in the parish, Association members will be interested to know that work is due to start shortly on a managed retreat project on the west side of the Selsey peninsula. The first stage will be the building of a new inner sea wall to the west of the large caravan site and the existing sea wall will then be breached thus creating a new salt marsh. The area will then become a new reserve managed by the RSPB in conjunction with Pagham Harbour.

Welcome Pack for new residents

Members are reminded that the Association gives a Welcome Pack to new residents and it is helpful if Denia Turnbull, or any other member of the Committee, could be informed when a house changes hands.