

Matter 1 – Legal Compliance and the Duty to Cooperate.
Representor ID number: WDLP19 0883

Further written representation from:
Will Streule

Having requested attendance at the hearings for Matters 1, 2, 8 and 9, I am submitting further details regarding Matter 1 that support and detail further my original representation.

Q 6 Community Involvement
Background

- a. Having been an elected Princes Risborough Town Councillor from 2005 to 2015 and, from 2011, chairman of PRTC Planning committee, I have been heavily involved in many Plans, visions and appraisals of the town over many years. Development beyond the green belt railway boundary has always been resisted (and upheld by Planning Inspectors – see Park Mill Farm enquiries) as, Princes Risborough’s AONB setting, poor road connectivity and poor location to attract significant employment would not support significant expansion.
- b. Discussions on expansion levels of PR for the requirement of a new WDC Local Plan began in 2013 with ‘community conversations’ (hosted by PRTC and WDC) involving many stakeholders and local organisations. At this stage options for growth were discussed and community driven solutions to the barriers for expansion sought. Outcomes of these conversations resisted development across the green belt boundary of Princes Risborough and prompted PRTC to begin the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan (as shown by the statement on the PRTC website (Appendix C, RARA’s full representation) this has since been changed/updated in Nov 2017).
- c. Following on from these WDC lead workshops and ‘community conversations’, in 2014 WDC commissioned a report by Tibbalds on options for growth (Appendix D of RARA’s original representation). The Tibbalds consultation set out 3 options for growth of Princes Risborough and was conducted with Princes Risborough’s Community groups, organisations and individuals on the options of 600 homes, 1000 homes and 2000-2500 homes. Although understandably the ‘Low growth’ option was favoured by residents, analysis of the ‘Issues and Responses’ raised, would consider medium growth (1000 homes) for Princes Risborough as a potentially sustainable option with the major expansion option raising many issues and obstacles.
- d. The issues and responses highlighted by Tibbalds related to all levels of expansion and have been used by WDC as markers for The Plan and The appointed Steering Group.
- e. WDC have stated their disappointment in the Tibbalds report, perhaps for its lack of clear conclusion, or perhaps as it didn’t support the proposed major expansion of Princes Risborough which appeared by then to have been **pre-determined** by WDC at cabinet level.
- f. In early 2015, WDC **informed** PRTC of their intention to consider Princes Risborough for major expansion (circa 2200 homes at that time). This was poorly received by a then apolitical PRTC who were rightly concerned that this intended expansion would not be supported by local referendum and that pursuing a Neighbourhood Plan would be a waste of time.
- g. In order for WDC to pursue an Area Action Plan for Princes Risborough, in place of Princes Risborough producing a Neighbourhood Plan, WDC offered PRTC a 25% CIL allocation ‘sweetener’.
- h. It therefore became apparent in early 2015 that WDC were intent on pursuing an unsustainable and unsupported scale of development for Princes Risborough that had ignored the outcomes of its former consultation and commissioned reports, falling very short of satisfying the Councils Statement of Community Involvement (WDLP11).

- i. At a public meeting in early 2015, WDC announced their intention, amidst much local concern and surprise at these proposals in light of previous consultation. The scale was presented as a 'Fait Accompli' and opposition groups and individuals quickly emerged.
- j. For a number of reasons I did not stand for re-election to PRTC in May 2015, not least for my concern of the restrictions PRTC would have on opposing this unsustainable level of growth and the acquiescence it was developing towards WDC's position. At the April PRTC meeting a decision to support the developing position of Risborough Area residents Association (RARA, of which I am now a committee member) was deferred by the PRTC chairman (Alan Turner, also then Independent WDCouncillor) until after the 2015 May local election. This was not re-visited.
- k. Since standing down from PRTC, both elected Independent District Councillors (Alan Turner and Gary Hall, also Town Councillors) joined the Conservative lead group of WDC and the third Conservative District Councillor (David knights) has been co-opted onto PRTC as has Matt Walsh who became PRTC's chairman and Town Mayor. Alan Turner was subsequently given the deputy portfolio for Planning position at WDC. Although in itself this may be irrelevant, it must be noted that WDC Conservative Councillors were 'whipped' into supporting the Local Plan submitted to the PI. And that Councillor Turner, despite being holding a deputy Planning position at WDC remained as the chairman of the Steering Group for Princes Risborough.

Solutions

- l. It always has and remains my view that Princes Risborough is not suitable for the scale of expansion proposed and that WDC's expansion Plan for Princes Risborough is **unjustified**. I appreciate the requirement for WDC to provide new homes and believe these should be located as close to good transport links and employment areas as possible.
- m. I do however also appreciate the unrestricted nature of the countryside beyond Princes Risborough and would accept that PR could take a greater share of housing than some of the more restricted settlements of the district.
- n. In light of the original formative consultation and in support of WDC's 'Statement of Community Involvement' (WDLP 11), I would support medium growth of 1000 homes for Risborough (some 30% expansion) as helping meet the Districts housing needs in a sustainable way. This would be supported by RARA who have lobbied on this point for soem time now.
- o. My original representation details further the issues and concerns expressed above and I seek a modification to The Plan to limit the expansion of Princes Risborough for its duration to 1000 homes and that these 1000 homes include all those that have received planning permission or have been built since the Plans start period of 2013.
- p. Any shortfall in the Districts OAN could be taken up with increased expansion of settlements that have better transport links and employment opportunities or with better use of and assessment of Brown field sites in the Districts urban areas.
- q. Should this not be possible as part of this Plan then an early review allowing time for reassessing the allocations and infrastructure requirements should be built into recommendations so that a sustainable and long term Plan that has community support can be developed. The Plan should have the communities of the district at heart and not commercial and/or political interest. Effectively, it should be a genuine community driven process that would provide **'the right homes in the right places'**
- r. Opportunities for tourism exist as the Town is in the setting of the AONB and sits on the Ridgeway National trail and on national cycle routes. Improvements to infrastructure and community facilities are required regardless, for the existing community.