



LECKHAMPTON GREEN LAND ACTION GROUP

NEWSLETTER 31

SEPTEMBER 2008

The inquiry into David Wilson Homes' plans for Farm Lane area and the response to the revised RSS for the SW region have meant a lot of preparatory work for LEGLAG.

On page 3 of this Newsletter you will find "[What you must do](#)". Go to page 3 to find ways in which you, our members can further our cause by writing, participating in a traffic survey, attending meetings, etc.

[Please help us in any way you can.](#)

Planning. Since our last newsletter in February there have been two very important planning events. The first is that David Wilson Homes (a Company within the Barratt Group), who submitted an outline planning application last summer to build 360 houses on the fields just West of Farm Lane (the site SD2 in the Tewkesbury Local Plan), have appealed against Tewkesbury Borough Council for "non-determination". As a result there will be a

Public Inquiry into the application by David Wilson Homes to build at SD2. This Public Inquiry will be held on the 29th, 30th, and 31st of October and on 4th, 5th, and 6th of November at the offices of Tewkesbury Borough Council. A Planning Inspector will chair the Inquiry, and then submit a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who will make the final decision as to whether planning permission should be granted. Once we learned that this Inquiry would actually determine the Planning Application, LEGLAG decided to apply for "Rule 6" status at this Inquiry (which means that we will be major players at the Inquiry, able to interrogate the developer's witnesses for instance). As a consequence of being granted this status we have had to produce a "statement of case" by 15 August (which we just achieved) and we have still to produce verbatim "proofs of evidence" for all our witnesses by October 1st. (These documents will soon be available on our web site)

Your committee has been working very hard to produce these documents in time and to make the best case we can; and we are fairly confident that the Appeal will fail. Our statement of case presents the powerful arguments against building on this site at all, because of its positive landscape, agricultural, wildlife, and recreational values; and also because of the negative effects (CO2 emissions, other pollution, and congestion) that would be caused by the traffic that this very large number of extra houses at this site (more than double the number at the existing adjacent site) - so poorly connected to the main road network and so distant from community facilities like schools, shops, and doctor's surgeries - would generate. But even if there were not these reasons against building on this land, we believe the application is premature because Cheltenham and Tewkesbury have only just started the process of producing a "Master Plan" for a joint development on this cross-border site, which the draft RSS requires. It is for that reason that Tewkesbury, Cheltenham, and the County Council all oppose the application, as well as us.

We expect that the Inspector will arrange for one session of the Inquiry to be held locally and in the evening, to enable local working people who have views they wish to express to do so. We would encourage all Leglag members to turn up at this session to show their concern –the strength of local opposition to development here is in itself a planning argument that we have used in our submission, and we would like you to demonstrate it to the Inspector! When we know the date of this session it will be announced on the web site and in the local press. In addition a flyer will probably be circulated.

Revised Draft RSS. An even more important planning event is that the Government has produced (on July 22nd, the last day of the parliamentary session, a traditional date for "burying" unpopular Government announcements) its proposed revision to the draft RSS (Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West). The Government's proposal for the total number of houses to be built annually in the South -West is a minimum of 29,623 dwellings per annum (or dpa), even larger than that (28,000 dpa) suggested by the Panel of Inspectors. That in turn was larger than the number (23,000) in the original draft. Historically the annual building rate for the South West has been about 20,000 dpa, so the new Government figure for the South West as a whole is nearly a fifty per cent increase in building rate. (LEGLAG had proposed continuing at the historic rate to start with, then reducing the number as the threat from climate change forced more urgent action!)

The figures for Gloucestershire are roughly pro rata (about ten per cent of the whole South West) though in fact Gloucestershire has done better than other Counties (i.e. fewer extra houses). The Gloucestershire figures are:-

Draft RSS : 2430 dpa; Panel and Govt: 2820 dpa; Historic rate: 2400 dpa. Thus for Gloucestershire the increase in building rate proposed by the Panel and the Government is "only" about a 16% increase on the historic rate. Also the number for our threatened area at the foot of Leckhampton Hill was reduced by the Inspectors from 100 dpa to 65 dpa because they did take some account of the avalanche of letters from Leckhampton! This too has been accepted in the Government's "Revised Draft RSS". The more favourable treatment of Gloucestershire of course reflects the many constraints on further development here, due to the Cotswold and Forest of Dean AONBs, the floodplain of the Severn, and also the Cheltenham/Gloucester "Green Belt".

Nevertheless, even if Gloucestershire could be said to have got off relatively lightly, the consequences of the proposed revised draft RSS would be disastrous for our area. The proposed figure for the number of new dwellings in Tewkesbury District up to 2026 is so large (14,600) that prospective developers of almost every possible building site in the Borough will fall over one another in the rush to put in their claims. This is because the Borough will need to provide at least 3650 houses in its 5-year housing bank at all times - any shortfall could leave them open to High Court action by a prospective developer. Naturally prospective developers of sites which could be given the valuable "Leckhampton" cachet will be in the lead -indeed we have two in our area already! And because the draft RSS does not allow phasing by the Local Authority, nor does it give priority to Brownfield land over Greenfield land, it will be hard for Tewkesbury to resist these claims. Moreover, development at Shurdington would - as we have already seen - not be strongly resisted by most Tewkesbury Councillors, as it would take some pressure off Churchdown, Bishop's Cleeve and Tewkesbury Town, the main population centres in Tewkesbury Borough.). The irony is that in the current state of the housing market, the developers would be most unlikely to actually build many houses for years - but once the planning permission is given, it would be hard to reverse. Thus the land we are trying to protect would fall prey to commercial pressure, and the planning arguments against development here would not get a fair hearing. Therefore

the Government's proposal MUST BE STRONGLY OPPOSED !

so the Government is forced to change its proposals. LEGLAG itself will of course comment in detail on the Governments proposed "revised draft RSS",

But just as important are **YOUR** comments! See "*What you must do*" on the next page

“What You Must Do!”

These pages are an action list for **you!** There are 6 actions in all:

- 1. WRITE TO OBJECT** to the proposed revised draft RSS. This is *most important*. We want to smother the Government Office of the South West (GOSW) with another avalanche of criticisms, just as you did two years ago, responding to the original "draft RSS".

The Government proposals are embodied in four thick volumes (obtainable at your library) or on a disk (we have plenty of copies, but it is almost impossible to use because of the way the material is organised)... Please read the Government papers if you have time, but if not, you could object on the following grounds:

- (a) The number of dwellings planned for is far too high, both for the whole SW region and for Glos., because the population projections used assume high and continued economic growth at 3.2% pa, which has never yet been achieved for the region and is quite clearly not going to be achieved any time soon, as we are going into recession and the Chancellor's forecast for the future is not encouraging. This sudden turn of the economic wheel shows how rash it was to try to forecast the growth (of the economy, or of the population, or of the number of houses needed) up to twenty years ahead! A more flexible "plan, monitor, and manage" approach would have been more sensible. In particular, the forecasts for the number of dwellings needed in the first five years of the Strategy should be sharply reduced to historic building rate levels or below, taking into account housing market conditions. Beyond that, the numbers of houses planned for should be related to housing demand.
- (b) The assumption that household size will continue to decline at about the current rate has no justification and could easily be wrong. Indeed, since smaller average household size probably means that the CO2 emissions per person increases, due to less sharing, one could argue that it should be Government policy to try to reverse this trend, as part of the attempt to reduce our carbon footprint. This could be done by a combination of fiscal measures and social interventions, eg taxing second homes heavily, and encouraging down-sizing or sharing by the single elderly and house-sharing by the young.. If household size does not decrease as forecast, fewer houses will be needed.
- (c) The failure to allow Local Authorities to prioritise Brownfield sites will inevitably mean that developers will tend to develop the easier Greenfield sites first, contrary to Government policy(as in PPS3). Similarly, if the number of housing starts is not controlled by phasing, undesirable developments may be allowed which may later turn out to have been unnecessary because demand is less than forecast. These policies should be changed.
- (d) The objective of providing affordable housing for all is a laudable one, but the crude strategy that seems to underlie this RSS of "building so many houses that supply exceeds demand and prices fall" is expensive, damaging, and unnecessary. More focused measures are needed to cater specifically for the provision of affordable housing where needed.

Address. Your objection should be mailed to: "Regional Spatial Strategy Team", GOSW, 2 Rivergate, Temple Quay, BRISTOL, BS3 6ED ; and must arrive before 5pm on Friday 17 October. Alternatively you can send in your objection by email to rssconsult@gosw.gsi.gov.uk, or use the form provided on the online consultation portal at www.gosw.gov.uk/gosw/planning/regionalplanning .

Your objections should be headed "Comments on Proposed Changes to the Draft South West RSS" GOSW do provide a written form, but it is NOT necessary to use it.

2. **ATTEND THE PROTEST MEETING** on September 24th at 7.30 at Leckhampton School in Hall Road. This meeting is being organised by Local Borough and County Councillors, but representatives of all parties will be there, as well as a LEGLAG spokesman and professional Planners.
3. **SIGN THE E-PETITION.** This petition is not sponsored by LEGLAG because we believe individual letters are more effective in influencing planners. But we do agree with the spirit of this petition, which is organised by the "Save the Countryside" Campaign, and so we are encouraging members to sign it if they wish. Log on to www.savethecountryside.org.uk and follow the links.
4. **HELP** with a traffic survey. LEGLAG is planning a traffic survey to try to see what sort of traffic levels could be expected if an extra 360 families were to live at the site off farm lane. This is planned for Tuesday 23rd September, with a training session the previous week on Tuesday 16th. Most of the survey will be carried out at peak periods. If you could help, please phone Gerry Potter on 574677 or Margaret White on 523668 ..
5. **ATTEND the INQUIRY EVENING SESSION.** There will probably be an evening session of the Inquiry, most likely on Tuesday 4th November, and we want as many members of LEGLAG - and others - to attend and express their fury at the developers! (But no rockets - if it is on the 5th!!). We will let you know when it will be when we hear.
6. **BUY LOCAL MEAT** from the local farm shop at Burley Field Lakes on Saturdays. Supporting local Farmers is one way to ensure that the countryside does not become derelict! Unused land attracts developers.

Thank you. Your committee wishes to thank Ches Ringrose and Martin Williams for their significant help in the current busy time for the committee.

Wildlife Sightings in the LEGLAG area

The **Lesser-Spotted Woodpecker** (Red Listed) continues to be seen in the LEGLAG area. Several of the smallholdings (where it has appeared) have lately been restored to agriculture and the keeping of livestock, ie sheep, geese and free-range hens which in turn, will be a source of food for wild birds.

The highlights of February to July of 2008 are as follows :

FEBRUARY

A large number of **Redwings** were seen in the smallholdings. A **Greater Spotted Woodpecker** and a **Green Woodpecker** appeared near Hatherley Brook. **Pied Wagtails** were seen near Leckhampton Farm and a **Mistle Thrush** near Moat Cottage. **Goldfinches** and **Bullfinches** were seen near Robinswood.

MARCH

A good-sized flock of **Siskins** was seen in Kidnappers Lane. (This is a new bird for the LEGLAG area and brings the total up to 63). Several birds were heard singing during one morning, ie **Chiff-Chaff**, **Bullfinch** and 2 **Song Thrushes**.

APRIL

A flock of 7 **Goldfinches** appeared in the smallholdings. A **Heron** was seen flying near Kidnappers Lane. A **Greater Spotted Woodpecker** was heard drumming plus **Blackcaps** and **Wrens** in song. A **Goldcrest** appeared in unharvested Christmas trees in the smallholdings.

MAY

A Bat appeared in our garden in the Crippetts during one lunchtime. It may have been a Pipistrelle, they are sometimes active in daylight according to information we consulted. **Little Owls** continue to be resident in the smallholdings and along with **Redwings**, **Goldfinches** and a **Goldcrest** prove that this area is a rich habitat. Two male **Garden Warblers** were heard singing simultaneously in trees near Hatherley Brook. Thirty species of birds were counted in one morning, but every single report I have received from Tony Meredith has contained a healthy number proving the importance of the LEGLAG area considering the growing decline of birdlife across the UK.

5

JUNE

A large number of **House Martins** were seen over Lotts Meadow. A **Buzzard** made an appearance over Farm Lane and several **Long-Tailed Tits** around Kidnappers. There was the lovely sight of a **Blackcap** feeding its young beside Hatherley Brook.

JULY

A family of **Jays** was seen in the remains of Little Vatch Orchard and a male **Willow Warbler** was heard singing near Lotts Meadow. A small flock of **Starlings** was seen flying around the smallholdings between Shurdington Road and Merlin Way.

My thanks to those people who have contributed over this period, especially Tony and Frances Meredith. If anyone has any information on wildlife seen in the LEGLAG and surrounding area, or needs more specific information on the above could they please contact me.

(Steve Gladstone)

LOCAL PRODUCE

One way to help save our Green Fields is to ensure they are used productively for grazing animals. We all like to watch the free show of the free range pigs and piglets along Farm Lane, but we would help the farmer more by buying his meat! So go along to the Burley Field Lakes Farm Shop (open every Saturday from 10 to 4.30) where Pam Kincart will sell you your weekly supply of free range beef, lamb, pork, chicken and eggs! They are good value and excellent quality. The shop is accessed off Leckhampton Lane, half a mile from Crippetts Corner.