

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen

Following from what has been presented, I should like to speak to you on the Planning process within a Local Authority and in particular with WDC. Although I am currently the County Councillor for the area, I was a District Councillor on WDC up to 2007. Incidentally I am standing as the Conservative candidate for the Bledlow & Bradenham ward at the local elections on 7th May and if elected I hope to be able to fight these developments especially on the areas planned for Green Belt and AONB. I shall be at the coal face working for you as Residents. As I am Resident of Saunderton, I feel passionately that we must protect our rural areas for future generations. I appreciate that St Congar has already an application in to WDC for 212 houses on the brownfield site which may be passed through quite easily as this is a site which has already been used albeit for Commerce. We need to challenge the change of use from Commercial to Residential for a number of reasons:

1. Increased traffic. With 212 houses expect in excess of 500 extra cars on Haw Lane, either accessing the A4010 under a single file traffic light operation under the bridge at an already dangerous junction or heading up Haw Lane to Chinnor Road in Bledlow Ridge, heading to West Wycombe for further traffic chaos there and at the Pedestal Roundabout. Therefore we can object on the basis that there is no adequate road infrastructure to cope with these additional vehicles.
2. We are in desperate need of employment otherwise we shall become a dormitory village.
3. There is currently no footpath to the Station. Residents would have to walk 1 mile to get to the it & it is unlikely that they will. Instead they will drive to the Station and have to park on adjoining roads as there are only 47 free parking spaces.
4. WDC state as there is a Station in Saunderton this is an alternative to the car which I dismiss. Residents will still need to have cars whether they drive to the Station or not.

I am sure that some of you attended a meeting at the Clare Charity Centre when the Head of Planning at WDC together with the Deputy Cabinet Portfolio Holder presented the draft plans back on 3rd December. It was stated that house building targets are currently running at approx. 400 houses per annum within the District and that these need to increase between 600 and 700 to meet demand. It was then stated that a Developer St Congar was looking to submit a planning application by Christmas for approx. 215 houses on the existing brownfield site. The planning system assumes that brownfield sites should be developed before greenfield sites are used for development. The Planning process would then see a Public Consultation on the possibility of creating a Greater Saunderton with the development of either up to 500 or 800 units which would take anything up to 5 years.

An application was received early in 2015 for the site for just over 200 homes which you know about. Planning applications are normally dealt with in 13 weeks, unless the applicant gives the Council additional time. In this case, the applicant wrote to the Council in the middle of March, extending its deadline to the end of July.

Just under 3 weeks ago, I received an email from the Head of Planning at WDC which was sent to David Lidington MP about these plans which I shall move onto shortly. First, I must say that each Local Planning Authority must have a 5 year Housing plan and so, with its District Plan, WDC can see where all the housing will be built over the next 5 years to meet demand. From my perspective any Local Plan should be part of a District Wide Plan.

Now the Saunderton Village Plan

What is the Saunderton Village Plan?

The Council will be preparing a plan for Saunderton which will be an Area Action Plan or (AAP). Back to the email that I received; 2 Key points were raised which I found unacceptable:

1. And I quote: "By separating out the Saunderton Village Plan from the district wide Local Plan, it allows for faster progress to be made. Without that speed St Congar would require their brownfield site to be determined in the normal way. **St Congar will be contributing financially to allow the plan to be brought forward more quickly.** At present the timetable indicates the draft plan would be put to Cabinet on 8 February next year. This is a very tight timescale."

To me that is not a democratic process with a Commercial Organisation funding this plan. However when I challenged the Officer, I was told Saunderton Village Plan is a core part of the work of the team preparing the Local Plan for the District as a whole which is contrary to what was said before. The team is funded by the Council – by the taxpayer. However, by doing a plan for the village, much more detail can be included, so that there is much more certainty about what would be allowed, and the community facilities that must be provided. This is detail that would be required for any subsequent planning application. Landowners in the area are being invited to contribute towards this cost, given that they would have to undertake this work in any event. Without this contribution all the work would have to be funded by the taxpayer.

2 Again a quote "Saunderton is unique in the District in that it is a village with a railway station with a good, regular, fast service. We have not specifically spoken to Chiltern Railway about this, but are in contact with them over the district wide Local Plan. Expanding Saunderton therefore has the potential to offer residents alternatives to the car that other locations would not be able to do". Since that time, David Lidington has been in contact with Chiltern Rail and the extra numbers travelling from Saunderton would not warrant any extra rail services. With potentially 800 extra houses there would equate to approximately an extra 2000 vehicles or even more. With a minimum of 500 houses the Developer will build a 2 class primary school and village shop and possibility a village hall, but that is it.

The planning Officer stated "On the basis of the timetable that the Council has published, the applicants for the Molin's site have extended the time that the Council has to determine that application, to the end of July. If good progress on the Saunderton Village Plan is being made, they might further extend the time on the current application. On the other hand, they may require the Council to determine that application. If it results in a refusal, the applicant can then appeal, with costs to the Council in the region of £100,00-£200,000.

With timings of the Saunderton Action Plan, the preparation of the plan including Public Participation is completed by February 2016, with the proposals published by March 2016. It will then be submitted to the Secretary of State in May 2016. There will be a Public Examination in July 2016 and could be adopted by December 2016, whereas the Risborough Plan is planned for the end of 2017 and the 5 reserve sites in Wycombe by 2018.

Interestingly enough, **about 1 month ago the Secretary of State threw out 2 Local Plans due to a lack a proper road infrastructure.** The first was Hampden Fields in Aylesbury where 6,000 houses were planned and the second one was in Aston Clinton with approximately 40 houses. So we have a chance, but we must fight this development on Green Belt and AONB as best as we can to protect our wonderful rural countryside. Thank you