

South Gloucestershire Core Strategy

Reconvened EIP

7th March 2012

Statement from Yate Town Council

Our underlying position has been set out in earlier submissions, the core message of which is that for a range of reasons we oppose the proposals for additional housing numbers at Yate, and consider the windfall sites currently under construction at Westerleigh Road (Coopers Works), Sea Stores and Barnhill Quarry provide for natural growth within the community.

We understand that the reconvened inquiry is focussed upon whether additional housing should be allocated in South Gloucestershire on other sites and so this additional submission is focussed upon other sites around the Yate/Sodbury community where developers are arguing that their land should be allocated for development.

We are strongly opposed to the allocation of additional / alternative sites in Yate/Sodbury, for three essential reasons:

- 1) A careful process, in which the community participated, identified the criteria for evaluating possible sites for residential development, and then mapped the sites developers were suggesting against those criteria. It was through that process that land north of Brimsham Park was identified as the least worst option. It is rare for a community who are fundamentally opposed to any development to also be willing to engage positively in this sort of options evaluation and we consider that evaluation has considerable weight. It was produced by a combination of professional officers carrying out technical assessments, and local people using local knowledge to check and challenge those professional assessments in workshops and meetings. We were united in concluding that Brimsham Park was the least worst of the options. In doing so, we knew we were reaching a conclusion against the interests of ourselves as residents of north Yate, and in particular as ward councillor for Brimsham Park I was aware that this was against the direct interests of the residents I was elected to represent. We have held public meetings, as local councillors, and our MP has held public meetings. Throughout that process, local opposition has been about the concept of massive development anywhere in or around the town.
- 2) Yate Town Council has over the years strongly supported the community at North Road in its continuing opposition to attempts to develop there. We have done so for a number of reasons, all of which remain valid, but are further strengthened by the decision to allocation 3000 houses at Brimsham Park and the cumulative consequences where North Road also to be allocated.
 - a) Core reasons: development at Engine Common/ North Road is out of scale with the existing rural community, is contrary to the character of the community, its role and function. It would treble the size of the community, which fundamentally alters the character of the community and its role. It would have a dramatic impact upon the Green Belt.

North Road/ Engine Common is a community in its own right, with its own identity. Some of the residents have lived there for generations and form a tight knit rural community, very distinct from the urban community across the railway line. People who have chosen to move there, have done so as a conscious choice – for them all there was the option of living in a modern urban development the other side of the railway line, but they have positively chosen to live in a rural community, close to urban facilities but outside of it. Like the residents of Yate Rocks to the north east of Yate, these two rural communities play a vital role in our wider area. That role would be lost if either simply became part of the urban sprawl. The people who chose to live there would move away, and our community would be more monocultural. Yate as a whole benefits from the diversity of people, experience and lifestyles that North Road/Engine Common and Yate Rocks bring to our area, which could not be present in a densely developed urban area.

The railway line, and the nature of the road link, via the bypass only, have served to ensure that distinctiveness has been maintained. If North Road is urbanised, then we will lose that community and its distinctiveness. You cannot treble the size of a community without fundamentally changing it. This would be a problem wherever you decided to treble a community, but the particular proximity to Yate exacerbates that damage, because it would then become a westward urban sprawl, rather than an enlarged village. It would be swallowed up by the urban sprawl.

We have long argued for an extension to the Green Belt to make North Road a green belt community, to preserve its character, and to extend the Green Belt to the railway line, providing a distinct western edge to the urban area.

b) Culmulative effect

An allocation at North Road would place additional cumulative strains on the same infrastructure in terms of highways, sewers and secondary education as the Brimsham Development. Starting from the RSS there has been no suggestion at any stage that Yate could handle more than 3000 dwellings, yet this proposal would require the community to address that. Development at North Road/ Engine Common will put pressure on the same key highway junctions, as most Brimsham residents will be heading westwards towards the major centres of employment on the North Fringe, via the B4089 which will also be expected to serve any North Road development – creating congestion.

Currently, some Yate children go to North Road School. It provides a different school experience, so for example Yate children for whom the environment of the big urban schools is not appropriate have thrived in the small rural school North Road provides. Urbanisation of North Road will remove that distinctiveness, and therefore the choice available to young people. In rethinking how to provision primary education for what would now be an extension of the town urban area there is a risk the school might be closed as no longer being needed for a distinct rural community. At secondary level it will put additional pressure on Brimsham Green – so all the secondary needs will move into the one school.

Developing North Road, as a separate urban development will be resource wasteful, as it will mean duplication of resources currently planned for Brimsham – or, will involve the destruction of North Road community and its incorporation into urban Yate. Either is bad planning.

So, we are concerned that any development here adds cumulative pressure to the impacts of the Brimsham Green development, which are not linear in their cumulative effect, create problems for how those needs might best be addressed.

- 3) South Gloucestershire Council is fully meeting the strategic needs for development for the next 15 years, without further allocations at Yate. In Yate we have three major sites already holding full consent, and actually under development and Peg Hill ready to be developed. Following the EIP last summer agreements were negotiated to provide for a quick route to implementing the Core Strategy outcomes, via either an SPD or master plan, whichever proved quicker. A new site without that agreed approach could not come forward as quickly as the sites already in the development process. To add an additional site would destabilise the Strategic process, in particular the work that has been done with residents in Yate urban area, and in particular the residents of Brimsham Park through workshops and consultation to identify key needs and how to address them would need to be developed afresh in relation to a wholly new allocation.

Summary

North Road is not in Yate Parish. In saying the development should not be at North Road/ Iron Action we are not being NIMBYs, on the contrary, we are recognising that if development has to come to the town, it is far better, as the criteria mapping work showed, for it to come in a place within the current urban area, in a way that preserves our rural communities at Yate Rocks and North Road, which we value as complimentary to the urban area..