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**Brafield on the Green – ACTION GROUP – Latest News**

There has been so much activity since the last newsletter!

The last of the **drop-in sessions** took place at the Working Men's Club and the Sargeant Memorial Hall. With the help of the Action Group members, the residents of the village managed to send in over 230 letters from almost half the houses in the village – and they are just the ones we have copies of. So the true figure must be much higher! That is an amazing response and everybody in the village has shown that they really care about these crazy proposals to build houses and a major road next to us!

Some of the residents took part in the demonstration march organised by **Quinton and the Northants Residents Alliance** which was featured on both ITV and BBC early evening news.

You will have noticed that large banners have been put up at the crossroads at the top of Billing Road and at the top of Church Lane. You may also have seen large posters that have appeared in various locations outside the village stating "Don't Pillage Our Village". It is important that we inform everybody who passes through our village and the surrounding area that these plans are not welcome and fundamentally wrong.

You may have read in the press that the **County Council** has voted overwhelmingly to reject the Core Strategy in its current form. Their press release stated they had "concerns centred around the proposed levels of housing growth; the impact on villages and greenfield sites; whether there would be enough investment for infrastructure; the risk of flooding; and the need for ongoing consultation with residents."

Cllr Heather Smith, County Council cabinet member for Environment, Growth and Transport said: "We have listened to what members of the public and councillors have had to say, and the serious concerns they have raised about the emerging proposals for the long term growth of the area, and agree that these proposals cannot be supported as they stand. I am also keen that greater attention is paid to ongoing involvement and consultation with local communities as we move to the next stage of the process."

The **West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit** was to have issued a revised strategy in November this year which would have been put out for further public consultation. However they have raised concerns that this deadline would not allow enough time for some key studies to be completed and for them to fully consider all of the issues including flooding, transportation and responses to the recent consultation. There were 6,023 responses to the core strategy in total. We are still waiting to find out when they will issue the revised plan – but clearly it has been delayed until well into next year.

So far we have achieved what we set out to do, make sure the JPU realises that its strategy is not fit for purpose and that there is real doubt about the justification and need for thousands of new houses in West Northamptonshire! However we must remain vigilant and be prepared to tackle them again when there are more developments. The village web site continues to be a valuable reference point to find out the latest information published on these plans – I encourage you to visit it regularly.

Thank you everybody for your support and hard work! Keith Crompton Chair of Action Group

**Dates for Parish Council Meetings for 2010**

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> January   | 7.30 p.m  |
| Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> March     | 7.30 p.m.   |
| Monday 17 <sup>th</sup> May       | 7.p.m. Annual General Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting followed at 7.30 p.m. by Parish Council Meeting |
| Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> July       | 7.30p.m.  |
| Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> September | 7.30 p.m.   |
| Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> November  | 7.30 p.m.   |

*The Chairman and Councillors of Brafield Parish Council send their best wishes to all residents this Christmas and throughout 2010*

Next Parish Council Meeting:  
Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January at 7.30 p.m. in the Sargeant Memorial Hall Brafield

**The Joint Core Strategy...emerged or submerged? Where now?**

Some personal thoughts from Kevin Ward.

Thankfully the frantic period of activity in informing you all and helping you to take part in commenting on the planning proposals came to an end after September. The Joint Planning Unit (JPU) eventually received over 6000 responses, over 1500 of which were individual letters including, I am sure, some substantial reports.

There is no doubt that our own village contribution was perhaps as much as 20% of those individual letters as that was our agreed strategy. What a great effort! Following the presentations in the Village Hall, our community rallied brilliantly and I think we have every reason to be really proud about our collective efforts.

The volume of responses successfully inundated the Planning Unit – as indeed flood would probably saturate their new areas of development if allowed to go ahead on the scale and in the locations proposed. Logging, acknowledging and analysing the responses will take months. The November deadline has been swept away and late Spring or early Summer 2010 loosely suggested as dates for the next stage of reporting to regional government.

With an election pending and Conservative proposals to reform, yet again, our local planning processes, some uncertainty clearly lies ahead for the present planning system. Moreover, shameful though this present process was by effectively conducting an experiment to 'flush out the problems', the issues now out in the open are serious and significant.

We and our partner parishes had already identified them. The Joint Planning Unit itself too, although it must surely have recognised these problems all along, has pumped them into its written response to regional government. Suddenly they are openly admitting great concerns about:

- The 'inadequacy' and 'weakness' of existing infrastructure' – 'several ...deficits must be addressed before significant growth can be accommodated'
- the uncertain funding for new infrastructure
- the need for 'key studies' to be completed on flooding, transport modelling and biodiversity
- the insufficiency of the 'evidence needed to support the proposals'
- the risk of unsustainable growth 'to the detriment of the local and wider area'
- the soundness of the population projections on which the whole Strategy is built which requires 'basic research...on a robust basis'

The broad extent of these concerns are such that 'without the necessary infrastructure the growth (under any options) simply cannot be delivered and plans for growth are inappropriate'.

Clearly these are massive issues and further underline the inane of issuing the Strategy for consultation in the form to which we had to respond. It's clear now too, from our other research and enquiries, that there are many political dimensions to all this that I cannot develop here but will come out if there is ever a Public Inquiry into future proposed Strategic options.

The combination of the present state of the economy, the forthcoming election and possible change of Government, and the accepted concerns about flood risk, environmental impact and transport infrastructure are all significant issues for the short-medium term. It has also been accepted that the brown field capacity of the town area is greater than had formerly been declared, as we suspected, and so there are good reasons to scale down development on rural green belt.

So, for now the JPU will continue on its present course of action and we need to be prepared for another possible round of frantic activity probably towards the middle of next year. We will at least go into battle well equipped following our recent experience of working together within our village community and in strong partnership with some of our neighbouring parishes.

**Richard Mackaness**

Following the sad death of Richard Mackaness in September this year, the Parish Council felt it would be appropriate to mark his passing by seeking ideas from the Parish for a lasting memento of Richard. He gave so much to our Parish in so many ways: to the Church, to the Village Hall, as a Farmer, and not least in his 32 years on the Parish Council. If you have any suggestions for an appropriate commemoration please contact any Parish Councillor.

Members of the public are most welcome to attend any meeting  
At the start of the Parish Council meeting, time is set aside for public enquiries