

Save Barton Farm Group

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Dear Supporter,

News Update – Save Barton Farm Group (SBFG)

There has been a lot happening since our last update earlier this year and given that the Hampshire County Council Structure Plan has been adopted (more below), we felt now is a good time to bring you up-to-date with the current position and all that we have been involved in over the past few months.

Hampshire County Council (HCC) Structure Plan

The HCC Structure Plan was formally adopted in mid-May 2000 (but see below re. legal challenges). This means that the "reserve" site (see below re. RPG9) for a Major Development Area (MDA) at Winchester North/Barton Farm has been included in the Structure Plan.

Winchester City Council (WCC) Local Plan

The baton has passed to the local planning authority (Winchester City Council) to plan how the MDA can be accommodated. Winchester City Council has set up the "Winchester District Plan Members Panel" to prepare a draft Plan and it is a testament to all our hard work and support that the SBFG has been invited to be a part of this process.

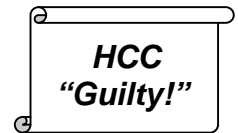
We also welcome the cross-party support from WCC who appear to be doing all they can to oppose any development at Winchester North.



SBFG Website

Please visit our website at www.savewinchester.co.uk
It is in the early stages of development and we welcome any comments or contributions you may have.

Proposed legal challenge to HCC Structure Plan



Firstly, a big thank you to those supporters who helped to fund our costs (£700) for obtaining Counsel's opinion in respect of a potential legal challenge to Hampshire County Council's Structure Plan. The opinion is a valuable document as it is an independent justification of our cause. Counsel identified a number of legal errors in the County Council's decision to include Barton Farm / Winchester North in the Structure Plan. The main errors are:

- **The failure** of the County Council to undertake an environmental assessment of the land
- The decision **is perverse** given that there was no discussion of the land at the Examination in Public
- The decision **ignores and is in direct conflict with** the advice of the previous Local Plan Inspector who concluded that new housing at Barton Farm "...*would seriously affect the setting and character of Winchester.*"

By obtaining Counsel's opinion, we have and will use its full potential as follows:

- As reference material in our discussions with WCC and the implementation of the Local Plan
- We have written to HCC and asked for answers to Counsel's Opinion. HCC's reply was cursory and we will be following this up in future discussions
- As a direct consequence of us obtaining Counsel's Opinion, another body decided to take legal action along similar lines.

After considerable debate within the Group and consultation with other relevant groups, we decided not to proceed with legal action against Hampshire County Council. This is because if we lost the action, our legal costs and those of the Respondent, were estimated at £70,000 minimum and we believed it would be irresponsible to expose the SBFG and its supporters to such a potential cost at this stage. There will be more legal challenges to mount in the future and we hope to be in a position to proceed with no undue financial constraints. Please note there has been a legal challenge to the Structure Plan from two sources: Hart District Council and also a consortium of developers who want to develop North Whiteley and who believe (as do Winchester City Council) that the Major Development Area should be sited there rather than at Barton Farm / Winchester North – we shall keep you informed of the progress of these two independent legal challenges.

⌘ Important archaeological finds at Barton Farm

The Hampshire Chronicle newspaper recently led with a front-page headline and article announcing that the Winchester Museums Service had found significant archaeological sites at Barton Farm. Comments from our local MP and WCC suggest that this will help to defend against any development at Barton Farm. The story raises two important points:

- ❶ The independent report from the Winchester Museums Service is an important boost to the defence of Barton Farm.
- ❷ The Hampshire Chronicle independently reported the finds and, without prompting, linked it with the possibility of saving Barton Farm. This is indicative of the growing support of the local media against the proposed development.

Historic march through Winchester

The SBFSG organised a march through Winchester in March this year to demonstrate against the proposed development at Winchester North. The march was reported as the biggest demonstration Winchester has ever seen. The numbers would have been far greater were it not for police restrictions on the number of marchers, but the police praised the organisation of the march and the cheerful co-operation of the supporters. A huge thank you to our supporters for turning-up.

The march launched the “Save Winchester Campaign”, an alliance between the Save Barton Farm Group, Winchester Landscape Conservation Alliance and the Winchester City Residents’ Association. The campaign continues to show a united front amongst all community groups within Winchester, who collectively oppose any development that threatens the unique relationship between Winchester’s historic City and landscape setting.

SBFG Sub Groups

We held a meeting in April in which we invited supporters to help form sub-groups within the SBFSG. The meeting was well attended and various sub-groups were formed, for example, **Research, Media and Publicity /Marketing**. Some of the sub-groups have subsequently met and others will be meeting soon.

Meeting to discuss the new Regional Planning Guidance (RPG9)

On 1 June a public meeting was held by HCC at Winchester Guildhall (to which SBFSG were specifically invited), to discuss the new RPG9. This is the Regional Planning Guidance given by Government to local authorities, in respect of housing requirements over the next 5 years. If accepted, the figures for the South East will trigger the immediate release of all the reserve sites in Hampshire.

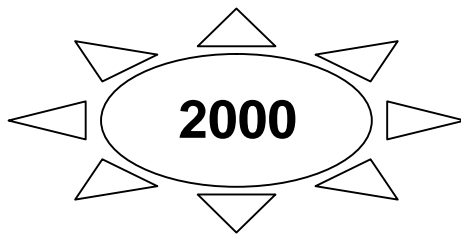
We support HCC in their attempt to reduce housing numbers across Hampshire. However, the meeting was significant for two things:

- Tim Greenwood, Chief Planning Officer for Hampshire County Council, admitted in his reply to a question from the floor that if the housing figures for Hampshire proposed by RPG9 were implemented, the “reserve” site status of Barton Farm / North Winchester would evaporate and it would become a designated site for a Major Development Area.

This explodes the myth perpetuated by Hampshire County Council that the granting of reserve site status in the County Structure Plan to Barton Farm / North Winchester would protect the area against any threat of future development. Already the “reserve” site status has been shown for what it really is – a misleading device to appease the people of Winchester. Anyone with experience of the planning process knows that “reserve” site status is ineffective and that is what we have argued since our formation. Unfortunately, we have now been proved right.

- Although the meeting was designed to address housing numbers in general, a number of speakers, not least SBFSG supporters, spoke from the floor in a passionate defence against development at Winchester North to such an extent that it was the only local issue that the Chairman mentioned in his summing up.

Winchester Millennium Debates



The SBFG attended and distributed leaflets at the WCC Millennium debate at the Guildhall regarding the environment. **Dr David Bellamy** was the guest speaker and he was surprised and saddened to hear, from SBFG speakers from the floor, of the proposed development at Winchester north and all that would entail for Winchester.

Dr Bellamy said "...with the support of the people of Winchester, you can win."

Dr Bellamy even considered a request to become Honorary President of the "Save Winchester Campaign" which we are following up.

What Do You Think Of It So Far?

We need to remind people that there is still work to be done and so it is important to raise the profile of the campaign. It has therefore been the job of the Publicity and Marketing Sub-Group to assess the impact of the Save Barton Farm campaign so far and to plan the next steps.

Group members felt that many people have assumed the fight is lost so there is no point in fighting on, or that it is won so there is nothing left to do. The most important weapon in changing this view is up to date information about the campaign, so here it is!

We are looking into siting large "Save Barton Farm" signs in gardens along Andover Road/Andover Road North/Park Road as a constant reminder of what Winchester residents will lose. If you would be willing and able to have such a sign, please contact us.

We are also looking into sending postcards of Barton Farm to raise the profile of the campaign and to further increase our number of supporters. Other suggestions included writing to all the "Winchesters" around the world asking for their support.

All of these initiatives require money. Donations are always welcome. If you would like to help organise a fund raising event, car boot sale, sponsored walk etc, then please contact us. We really need your financial as well as vocal support. We can't do this without you.

Winchester North / Barton Farm

You may have read in the local media over the past couple of months that "Winchester North" does not necessarily mean Barton Farm. Two points on this:

- The original requirement from HCC was that any development at Winchester North would be immediately adjacent to the edge of the existing City boundary ie Barton Farm. We have heard nothing from HCC to refute this although WCC advise that the field of search extends from Abbots Barton to Bullington Cross and encompasses the District from east to west.
- Even if the MDA were not sited at Barton Farm but somewhere else to the North of Winchester eg Littleton, Kings Worthy, the Wonstons etc, the effect on Winchester would be the same as if the development had been at Barton Farm.

Car Stickers

"Save Barton Farm" car stickers can be collected, free of charge, from Chris Slattery at 7, Courtenay Road, Winchester.

To help us...

Are your details as shown on this Newsletter correct? If not, please contact us as shown on the front page.