

# ***no2newton : Update at 13 Jan 09***

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***A non-political group fighting the Bingham/Newton Eco Town***

Dear supporter

Quite a lot has happened over the past couple of months. Please take the time to read this.

## **(1) LATEST NEWS: CROWN CONSORTIUM CHANGES ITS PROPOSALS**

Today we saw the attached Press Release to be issued 14 January stating that *“The Partnership of Defence Estates, The Crown Estate and Newton Nottingham LLP are to focus on the former RAF Newton as a possible location for a new sustainable community in Rushcliffe, Nottinghamshire, under the Government’s Eco-town initiative.”*

The good news is that they have dropped the proposal to build 6,000 houses etc as a northern extension of Bingham. Not only would this have changed Bingham out of all recognition, and our lives, it was also contrary to the Dept of Communities & Local Government (DCLG) eco town criteria.

But they will now be concentrating all their efforts into convincing DCLG that the Newton site (which is in the greenbelt) should go ahead.

There can be no doubt that an eco town at Newton would have a huge impact on Bingham and it is vital that people from the wider area respond to the government’s final public consultation.

## **(2) FINAL PUBLIC CONSULTATION:**

This was announced by government on 4 November and covers the proposed locations and standards for eco-towns. The government has done absolutely nothing to draw this important issue to the public’s attention, or to encourage responses.

It is vital that local people respond to this consultation and point out how a local site could not achieve the government’s sustainability aims. Please note that the last date for responses has been put back from 19 February to 6 March 09. After considering responses the government will publish the sites which it intends will be built. At present we are 3<sup>rd</sup> on the provisional list.

Before responding to this consultation please see the various documents on the DCLG website ([www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk) – see Eco Towns), in particular the government’s proposed sustainability standards which are:-

- ***Achieving zero carbon status*** across all the town's buildings, including commercial and public buildings as well as homes - a significantly tougher threshold than any existing or agreed targets
- ***Allocating 40 per cent of the area within the town to be green space***, at least half of which should be open to the public as parks or recreation areas [see (a) below]

- *Requiring individual homes to reach the Building for Life silver standard and also achieve **70% carbon savings** above current building regulations in terms of heating, hot water and lighting*
- *Providing a minimum of **30 per cent affordable housing** to provide more homes for social rent and assist those struggling to get on the housing ladder*
- *Creating more options for travel so that residents are able to make the **majority of their journeys without a car**, such as by public transport, walking and cycling [see (b) below]*
- *Ensuring a minimum of one **job per house** can be reached by walking, cycling or public transport to reduce dependence on the car [see (c) below]*
- *Locating homes **within 10 minutes walk** of frequent public transport and everyday neighbourhood services [see (b) below]*
- ***Raising the threshold** for individual homes so that they must all achieve at least level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes, which includes standards for household waste recycling, construction waste, water efficiency measures and reduced pollution*

(a) The Newton site appears to be a very similar size to Bingham, or perhaps slightly smaller. Bingham has 4,000 houses and little open green space. An eco town at Newton would have 6,000 houses and workspace etc, and 40% green space.

This means the housing density of an eco town at Newton would be about 3 times that of Bingham as it is now. Not so much an eco TOWN, more an ECO FLAT COMPLEX. Who would want to live there??

(b) The simple reality is that the great majority of eco town residents with jobs will continue to choose to commute to work by car. In the case of Newton, taking a bus or train into central Nottingham will not enable satisfactory or acceptable commuting.

Even with the continuing advance of IT to assist home working it is naive to plan (or assume) that the majority of eco town residents will not need to travel to various employment centres for work. Virtually all health workers, teachers, civil servants, police officers, local government officers etc will have to travel to work over a wide area.

However many jobs may be created at or near the eco town, we suspect a good proportion would be filled by outsiders travelling in each day.

Without a government ban, the car will remain the clear transport choice for work, social and leisure travel for the vast majority of eco town residents.

Also, we hope the sustainability appraisals will take full account of the Crown Estate's nonsensical proposal of bussing hundreds of eco town commuters to and from the (currently) small rail stations in Bingham and Radcliffe. It's hard to imagine a more effective way of adding to traffic, emissions and congestion.

(c) It's hard to take the DCLG's sustainability assessment seriously when part says that an "Existing planning permission for a business park ... could create up to 9,000 jobs"!! Even 900 would be highly optimistic – and even the existing industrial estate

has several units empty. We asked DCLG's consultants for the basis of the 9,000 jobs claim – they said they had simply accepted the Crown's figures!!!

### **(3) A46 DUALLING**

We welcomed the government announcement on 25 November that the A46 dualling would go ahead. Completion could be late 2011. The dualling is justified now, and much of the additional highway capacity will be taken up by the natural growth in traffic, and the 5,000 new houses and workspace etc planned as part of the Newark Growth Point.

The Crown and their partners probably think the A46 dualling will overcome many of the highway objections to their proposals. But we all know that it will simply allow access to the highway network, and further massive investment to improve A52 and A6097 is even more important.

Further strain on A52 will arise from the expected grant of planning consent for 1,800 new homes off Barrowby Road north west of Grantham as part of the Grantham Growth Point.

### **(4) JUDICIAL REVIEW**

The BARD campaign against the Stratford on Avon eco town (at Middle Quinton) will challenge the government's eco town procedures in the High Court on 22 & 23 January 09. If they succeed the government will probably have to start again from scratch.

It was encouraging to see in the recent press that one of BARD's expert witnesses (Mr William Sheate, a reader in environmental assessment at Imperial College, London) considers the eco town sustainability appraisals "exceptionally poor".

Let's hope BARD's team does well in the High Court.

### **(5) OUR LETTERS TO THE HOUSING MINISTER:**

We wrote to the Housing Minister on 8 September and 25 November pointing out sound reasons why an eco town at Newton/Bingham should be deleted from the DCLG list. It would be contrary to DCLG eco town criteria and guidance. Despite a reminder on 25 December we have received neither acknowledgement nor reply. Is this ignorance, arrogance or incompetence??

How can we trust such a government department to decide the future of where we live??

### **(6) no2newton WEBSITE:**

Please have a look at our website which has just been updated and improved. Very many thanks to Halina Briggs who got it going last year, and to Graham Dean for all the recent work. Any thoughts on additional content or improvement will be welcomed.

### **(7) “NO ECO TOWN” POSTERS**

Are you displaying one?? If not, please contact me to collect one (laminated for outside use are available), or download the attachment.

The more posters we display – especially in Radcliffe and the villages surrounding Newton and Bingham – the more the Crown will appreciate the level of opposition.

Even though the Crown is dropping the eco town as a northern extension of Bingham, there can be no doubt that a 6,000 house eco town at Newton would have a huge impact on Bingham. For that reason it seems reasonable to retain our “Stop the Newton/Bingham Eco Town” posters.

### **(8) SAND & GRAVEL EXTRACTION AT SHELFORD**

There are preliminary proposals for sand & gravel extraction near to Newton. While few will welcome this, it could be another reason against building a so-called eco town at Newton.

I understand there will be a public exhibition in the Village Hall at Shelford on the 19 Jan (9.00am to 6.30pm), and an evening meeting from 6.45 until 8pm.

### **(9) SHELTER (the charity for the homeless)**

We are aware of a particularly cynical move by the government in giving £100,000 to Shelter to produce booklets favouring Eco Towns, to be distributed in the possible Eco Town areas. We’ve seen a sample of the Rushcliffe booklet but do know if any have been distributed. Has anyone else seen one yet??

### **(10) EMPTY HOMES**

If the government manages to have 10 Eco Towns built averaging 10,000 houses each, they would provide around 100,000 houses. But it would be much more effective to direct the resources at bringing into use the many empty homes across the country – almost 17,000 in Nottinghamshire and 63,000 in the East Midlands. There are almost one million empty homes in the UK.

Eco towns are one of Gordon’s “good ideas” to solve the perceived housing shortage and reduce global warming. Another of his “good ideas” is the government’s “Market Renewal” procedure whereby areas with streets of old, red brick terraced housing in need of improvement are demolished and modern small houses built to replace them.

Radio 4 yesterday reported that in Gateshead 12,000 houses had been demolished, the established communities dispersed and just 2,000 new houses built. Meanwhile the area is derelict and vandalised. The people displaced could not afford to buy the new houses.

**(11) ARE WE JUST A BUNCH OF NIMBYS?**

No! All along we have said:-

***no2newton RESIDENTS ARE NOT A BUNCH OF NIMBYS.***

***ALONG WITH MANY RESPECTED ORGANISATIONS WE FEEL THE GOVERNMENT'S "ECO TOWN" CONCEPT IS BADLY FLAWED.***

***WHEN NECESSARY HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS ARE IN PLACE WE WANT TO SEE A SENSITIVE AND APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT AT NEWTON.***

***WE WOULD WELCOME A WELL THOUGHT-OUT TRUE ECO VILLAGE OF 300 to 400 HOUSES BUILT AND LAID OUT TO A HIGH STANDARD.***

***THIS WOULD BE IN THE INTERESTS OF EXISTING RESIDENTS AND SOMETHING THE WIDER COMMUNITY COULD BE PROUD OF.***

Oh – and a very Happy New Year to you all

With best regards

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