

Blueprint Project.

Response from Northington Parish Council

Roger Brooke (Chairman)

24th December 2010

Dear Mr. Tilbury

We learnt of this project only in November. We organized one village meeting where two representatives from the Council were present, Liz Dee and Rui Marcellino. We circulated a questionnaire to those present at the meeting and have had a number of responses. This was not however a full and systematic consultation, but the conclusions are worth reporting, and probably fairly representative.

Northington-Swarraton is a small community with between 250-300 residents including children. It comprises five widely spaced settlements, the central one being around the Church and Village Hall. The only commercial activities are several substantial farms, stables, and one pub. A feature of the Parish is Grange Park Opera which has now been running for over ten years and is generally welcomed by the village.

Most people moved to the village because of its attractive, rural character and there is a universal wish to maintain that character. In many ways the village is ideally placed, provided one has a car. Good shopping is readily available at Alresford, Winchester and Basingstoke. Good primary and secondary schools are in easy reach as are entertainment facilities in Basingstoke and Winchester. Some residents commute to London while some work locally. Increasingly residents do some or all of their work from home.

As in most communities there is a mixture of families with children and retired people. Most people own their properties which have increased enormously in price over recent decades.

From the consultation a number of points emerged.

1. The single most important requirement is for much faster Broadband.
2. Several residents thought that it would be desirable to have limited rental accommodation and possibly some lower cost housing to purchase. The generally restrictive planning policies of the Council were thought appropriate but there are some locations, particularly disused farm buildings and an abandoned saw mill, which would be suitable for this kind of housing. It was noted that under the new Government Localism policy the Parish could well have additional powers to make local planning decisions. There will need to be a more careful audit of possible sites and the Council will consider how to pursue this once the Localism Bill has been enacted. We will do this in consultation with our City and Country Councillors
3. Most people do not support the idea that there should be more commercial activities in the village.
4. Given the reliance of residents on their cars it is important that the roads are well maintained, with pot holes swiftly repaired and verges regularly cut. There was no significant pressure for more bus services. There is also strong resentment that continuing representations by the Council to extend the speed limit on the B3046 past the entrance to Grange Park have been ignored year after year. The fact that there have been two recent accidents, to add to the list, should have led to a response by now. Our County Councillor is doing her best to get people to focus on this and it is quite disgraceful that no action has yet been taken, not least because of cost of extending the speed limit would be minimal.

We look forward to hearing the conclusions from the Blueprint exercise and further reports on the Localism Bill etc.

Roger Brooke, Chairman