

**NOTES FROM EMPLOYMENT NEEDS GROUP (ENG)
10 FEBRUARY 2015 – ARC (UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM)**

Present :

Cllrs : Simon Evans (Chair), Margot Power, Lisa Griffiths, Barbara Jeffs, Ernie Jeffs

WCC : Steve Opacic (Strategic Planning)

Residents : Jan Field, Irene Spencer,

A list of people was created from the attendees with an email address sought if they wished to be included in future email communications. Simon Evans has the list.

1. Simon Evans started by thanking and introducing Jan Field who has done a lot of work for the ENG. Simon Evans stated that the notes from this meeting will not be official minutes as they are not clerked and therefore do not form part of council records. Their validity was questioned and SE pointed out that neither he nor Jan edit the notes, and agreement will be sought from the attendees that they are a fair record of the meeting.
2. Simon Evans provided a summary of the Needs Group activities which lead to the preparation and submission of the report which was submitted to WCC in 2013. A number of the approximately 150 people who volunteered at the end of the January 2013 meeting expressed a wish to work with the ENG specifically. The initial meeting was attended on 26 February 2013 by 22 people who received paperwork in advance and was made up of individuals with specialist commercial knowledge, planning expertise, employers and interested residents and some councillors. This discussed the WCC notes and from this specific reports were commissioned by the ENG sought on Internet working home working commercial property, the Chamber of Commerce conducted an independent survey. A further meeting was held in March, a draft report was circulated in April which was then finalised by the ENG on 11/4/13 and subsequently presented and agreed at full council on 25 April 2013.
3. Reason for the meeting is as per the agenda : 'It is recommended that all the Needs Groups be invited to examine whether and how the erroneous population projections may have influenced their findings and that modified conclusions should be presented, if necessary.'
4. Steve Wallace stated that he works from home and was not contacted to participate in the homeworking survey. (Someone else echoed this). How can you assess the need if you have partial data. You need the correct proportions. SE responded that the person who prepared the report was unable to attend so could not ask how the report writer contacted individuals. SE added that the report stated that this was an important and growing element of the living/working population. Steve Wallace further stated that the census information does not ask when asking if you work in Alresford, if this is from home so when deducing the figure of those who live/work in Alresford how is it possible to be confident that what has been prepared is accurate? SE stated that projections cannot be 100% and SW then challenged the soundness of the evidence base.

Ken Veitch stated that if metrics are not pristine, you cannot make a decision.

Bob Fowler stated that ONS/HCC/WCC figures indicate a percentage error as they estimate from various statistics gathered from census returns.

Sam Kerr-Smiley questioned how much of the home working went into the final report. Jan Field responded that trends were included and she agreed things have moved on since then.

Steve Wallace asked which census it was based on as wasn't published until 2013 which makes the research 2 years old. SE said he did not know and would have to ask report writer.

5. Keith Barrett requested background reports which contributed to the evidence be made available. SE said he would seek to do so. Jan Field said that a lot of the work is already published so she can provide references to where the information came from.
6. Marilyn and John Weston asked who wrote the commercial property report. SE was concerned at divulging names of report writers without their permission but the names should be on the reports. With regard to the property report, Tony Marshall and James Prowse prepared the reports (they have different areas of expertise and knowledge).
7. Janet Barker asked if the report is to be written tonight by Jan Field and then sent to WCC? SE repeated that at the end of the meeting, if agreed there needs to be a change to the original report then a revised paper will come back to the group for approval. He is Chair of the meeting but the group needs to agree the report, as happened previously.
8. Steve Wallace (was it him??) questioned Jan Field's qualification for being part of the group. JF explained her background with the London Development Authority and other organisations, along with her experience publishing scientific papers supporting her understanding of the importance of referencing and setting out evidence.
9. SE said that he will ensure any future reports for the group which contribute to the published report must reveal their authorship.

SE requested that attendees go through the existing report and agree the content can remain as is or whether need to change any of the 7 recommendations.

Recommendation 1.

To retain the characteristics of Alresford as a working market town. (Quote from Brian Tippett). No change required.

Recommendation 7 : Connectivity.

The report source was from a local business, First Option, which have been involved in securing new broadband services.

Margot Power pointed out that the data communication service from Winchester has no back up,

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and that the subject of broadband provision was raised at the Infrastructure meeting. She added that the comment in the Infrastructure Needs Group (ING) report is based upon Alresford being reliant upon a single source for broadband. It is necessary to ensure a resilient data communication service is provided for Alresford; an employer cannot afford to be in the position of employing people who are not working if the one piece of data stream fails. (The number of jobs mentioned in the ING report has no relevance to the requirement for a resilient data communication provision. ?? Bob Fowler asked how the number of 538 jobs was arrived at, and MP said that the ING had said they would await comment from the ENG before making changes on the numbers in the ING report.)

Recommendation 5 : Tourism.

No change required.

Recommendation 3 : Retail space and jobs.

Original report indicates no significant retail space needed.

Sam Kerr-Smiley stated that a WCC report has subsequently shown there would be an increase requirement in the amount of 300 sq m in 2026, rising to 600 sq m by 2031, of comparison goods floor space. SE said that the original source of information which led to this conclusion was written following a survey conducted by the Alresford Chamber of Commerce. The research at the time showed shops could take extra footfall and they did not expect to have a requirement for additional space. SKS to circulate the WCC report.

Jan Field said the original DTZ report stated that retail space over a certain size would be subject to an impact assessment. Steve Opacic added that anything more than 500 sq m in floor space would be checked for impact on existing business. SO recommended the change between the two studies (ie Chamber of Commerce and later WCC report) should be undertaken. He added that the required retail space could be found through change of use of existing buildings. It was questioned whether Alresford residents would have the range of shops needed for to prevent shops like Gedyes closing. SO said that the figure for increased retail space is derived from the amount of spend expected to be generated by the population and retail opportunities provided to satisfy that spend ensuring shoppers continue to use Alresford rather than go elsewhere for their goods.

Recommendation 4 : Jobs in health services, education provision and other public services.

HS queried the ability of the surgery to cope. Dr Stokes has stated that the proposed increase in population should not affect the report as the surgery size and capability has been increased. SKS said he thought this part of the report should be updated to reflect this change.

Schools : Nursery and pre-school provision is part of Infrastructure and is driven by market forces. Infrastructure report says adapting an existing building could be looked into to cope with this requirement if needed.

Recommendation 2 : Current and future employment in Alresford

Janet Barker asked whether in relation to the industrial estate, Alresford could attract the people and businesses to fulfil 200 jobs. She said there will be some organic growth of existing business but

BJ/LG

that the proposed new large commercial estate will not work. She said it is known businesses do not wish to relocate from The Dean and that Pearsons Field is isolate so asked if it realistically achievable to think people will relocate and asked where will new business get their staff. She said new businesses will have to bring its workforce from outside. The developer has said that they will not build commercial premises on spec and if there is no industrial estate, there is no need to build the junction. She ended saying that the recommendation is based on flawed logic (round of applause!).

SE said that this is not what we are here to discuss. The groups role was not to discuss the land requirement.

Steve Wallace (??) questioned how many new people are expected in the working population category by 2031 (ie between ages 16-65)?

Irene Spencer spoke. She initially explained that she is helping to collate information and added that she was not part of the original group. She has been working with Sam Kerr-Smiley to agree the population figures and has a background in statistics and currently works for Southampton University.

(Lisa left at this point)

This Recommendation was agreed to be reviewed at a separate meeting.

Recommendation 6:

Ensure provision of land (range c. 1.5 - 3 hectares, to be further defined) for new business/commercial park, to provide the opportunity for businesses to remain or locate in Alresford, and secure some of extra jobs required.

There were several comments from the group about the validity of this recommendation considering the previous one about the number of jobs.

It was decided quote swiftly that this point also needs to be discussed further at a separate future meeting.

There was a brief discussion following the previous two point about the amount of data being referred to by several different people and how that data is being analysed and used.

SE suggested a sub group to meet and decide exactly what number sources were being used to create an agreed number by all. Half a dozen hands were raised to show a willing to meet and accept this task. Names were noted.

A group resolution was passed to say that Winchester City Council should be asked to withdraw the original Employment Needs Group report from the Local Plan evidence base because it is not regarded by the Employment Needs Group as being fit for purpose. This was a show of hands vote put forward and taken by the floor.

SE was asked if he agreed that the whole ENG Summary from 2013 was not fit for purpose.

SE explained that 5 of the 7 recommendations were not seen as needing any change by the group present.

In summary it was decided for a sub group to meet and discuss numbers and sources and report back to the main group.

A date to be set for a future meeting to be held to discuss these Recommendations:

No. 2 and No 6.

Plus both recommendations no.3 and 4 to be “ looked at “.

The date and time of the meeting to preferably held at 7.30pm and to be advertised to the existing group if they had nominated their email address and to approach the Whats on for a front page advert.

Meeting closed 9pm.