

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT BD11

Consultations with major landowners in the Parish

Imperial College London: WYE3 and other holdings

As Imperial College London own the WYE3 site, many buildings within the village outside WYE3 as well as the agricultural land around Wye and associated agricultural buildings, the Parish Council sought to work closely with the College in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.

In 2010, after Imperial had fulfilled the condition in Policy WYE3, of marketing the site as an educational facility and failing to find a taker, the Parish Council sought to set up a coordination structure so that Imperial in preparing a Masterplan for WYE3 would be working in alignment with the PC preparing a NP and ABC reviewing its Core Strategy. This group met regularly to try to review possible conclusions, timescales and consider options. As a result, the PC initiatives for WYE3 such as the Free School and the potential use of the Grade 1 buildings as a community centre are included in both the Neighbourhood Development Plan and the Masterplan. These turned into agreements whereby Imperial agreed to the Free School going into the Edwardian buildings and funding was secured through the Education Funding Agency. The Kempe Centre on a 3 year lease from Imperial, was developed as the temporary place for the start of the Free school which began in 2013. Unfortunately, confirmation of the location of the school has stalled and alternative sites both within WYE3 and elsewhere are being explored. The WNP is, following consultation, deliberately flexible over the allocation of different types of development on WYE3 and therefore includes the possibility of permanent location of the school in the Kempe Centre with new build to the north and east and playing fields on the Hop Garden field.

Imperial had the idea in the Masterplan of developing a village trust and agreed to approach the Heritage Lottery Fund to secure funding for the regeneration of the Grade 1 campus buildings and for wide use relating to the community, through education and local facilities and projects. The PC set out ideas for governance and the uses possible on the basis of extensive local consultation. Imperial set out ideas not radically different from the PC's.

Consultations continued on other parts of the WYE3 site.

The PC agreed Imperial's proposals for the use of:

- the Withersdane site as a clinic
- the ADAS site returning to woodland or equivalent
- further discussions took place on the relocation of agricultural businesses and the development of business hubs.

Again there is direct correspondence in the two plans for these site allocations.

Overall the differences between the Masterplan and the WNP centre on

- Imperial have not addressed the uses of the buildings in the village outside the WYE3 site which the NP has to address.
- Imperial have proposed extensive new housing development of up to 200 homes mainly on a greenfield site, whereas the NP proposes 50 located on brownfield on a phased basis.
- Imperial have not accepted the use of the Hop garden field as playing fields for the school

The PC prepared a detailed response to the Masterplan proposals (posted on the PC website) after extensive local consultation and a public meeting.

ICL have now stated (April 2015) that no negotiations or discussions can take place while they review their strategy.

Viability

The Parish Council identified that the majority of Imperial's holdings, held in a charity administered by the College's Endowment Board, were potentially profitable. The buildings in the village could be developed for residential change of use and would benefit from rapidly rising housing prices in the village. The values of agricultural land were also rising but in any case Imperial were able to let this land to a farmer.

The only liabilities in the holdings were the substantial listed campus buildings and adjacent academic buildings. The PC therefore sought to reduce this liability by finding funding streams to restore the properties to alternative and beneficial use. Hence funding from both the EFA and HLF were a means of relieving Imperial of continuing liabilities, and with some residential change of use, encouraging positive development of other parts of WYE3 and there would, therefore, be no cause for enabling development elsewhere.

The actions of Imperial in assisting the founding of the School and Imperial's agreement to the village trust and to entering discussions with the HLF, demonstrated that the PC's approach could work and produce a consistent plan for the parish.

The WNP provides a clear and proper viable basis for the future development of the village after detailed consultation and working with Imperial College.

Ed Cyster (WYE2 and 2a)

Ashford Borough Council had introduced a new pre-application consultation planning policy in 2009 and this was tested in a meeting with the Ed Cyster and his adviser on the development of WYE2. A detailed response was sent to him after this meeting and further comments were put together as the work on the WNP progressed. In spite of this the application for WYE2 was deposited with ABC that ignored all the comments that were made. This application was approved by ABC taking little notice of the PC's comments as the WNP, at the time of the meeting, had no status. The PC regard the proposed development as cramming onto a sensitive site and taking no notice of the many objections to the scheme from local people who were concerned about traffic, parking and safety. No development has yet taken place and so the WNP has included its WYE2 proposals in BD13 of the WNP.

In spite of the WNP's ideas Ed Cyster has further identified an adjoining field for further development off the WYE2 site identified as WYE2a (or WYE06 in the TRSDPD, see WNP Fig. 2.2). which was identified in the call for sites in 2014. The PC has taken the view, like ABC, that this site is completely unsuitable for any development of housing or any other use.

Taylor Wimpey (WYE1)

The pre-application process was also used on this site and local meetings were convened by the PC (as part of the WNP preparation) and Taylor Wimpey. As a result the Taylor Wimpey application was

registered in July 2014, though it did not take much notice of the WNP's ideas. This application was approved subject to redesign of elements of the scheme adjacent to the countryside (asked for by the PC). The PC's proposals for WYE1 are included in WNP BD13, as no development has yet taken place. The scheme finally agreed for the development does show some improvements in line with the PC's views.