



News release from The Dever Society¹

12 December 2007

PHOTOS AVAILABLE²

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Packed meeting sends Eagle Star packing

United front resolves to defeat Micheldever Station 'eco-town'

Almost 200 people crowded into the Warren Hall at Micheldever Station last night³ to give a unanimous veto to Eagle Star's latest proposals for a major new town in the Hampshire countryside.

It was standing room only as the Dever Society's President Khalid Aziz welcomed villagers, local politicians and planning professionals to the meeting. Winchester's MP **Mark Oaten**, who was unable to be present, said in a message of support: 'I am absolutely committed to doing all I can to keep Micheldever as the rural haven it is.'

The Society's vice-chairman, Tessa Robertson, outlined the 17-year history of Eagle Star's attempts to establish a new settlement at Micheldever⁴. Their plans have been vetoed at two county structure plan reviews and were roundly rejected earlier this year by independent inspectors reviewing the South East Plan⁵.

A litany of complementary arguments followed from the politicians and professionals, all united in their opposition to Eagle Star's proposals.

Martin Tod, the Liberal Democrat's prospective Parliamentary candidate, exploded the fallacy that any new settlement could offer residents a self-contained employment market, and forecast substantial commuter traffic. **Steve Brine**, the Conservative's prospective Parliamentary candidate, condemned the eco-towns initiative⁶ as a massive power grab by central Government; 'We need new homes,' he asserted, 'but they must be properly planned, and in the right place.'

Khalid Aziz read a message of support from **Patrick Davies**, Labour Party candidate for Winchester and a long-standing supporter of the Dever Society. Patrick promised to draw the attention of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Hazel Blears, to 'the appalling conflict with the established policies which Eagle Star's proposals could mean.'

Hampshire County Councillor **Jackie Porter** returned to the theme of self-sufficiency, citing the additional strain that any new settlement would impose on hospitals, colleges and retail centres in Winchester, Basingstoke and Andover. Dismissing the scheme as 'a dusting off and re-badging of earlier proposals,' Winchester City Councillor **Barry Lipscomb** nevertheless cautioned against assuming that the proposal has no prospect of success.

More follows ...

Steve Tilbury, Director of Operations at Winchester City Council, stressed that the eco-towns initiative lies wholly with central Government. 'We don't know the detail of the process,' he said, adding that 'the arguments against [the new town] are very strong in planning terms'. Nevertheless, the local planning authority would have to abide by any central Government policies expressed in the South East Plan.

Finally **Edward Dawson**, South East Regional Director of the Campaign to Protect Rural England, emphasised the Campaign's opposition to Eagle Star's plans. He warned that Government housing targets would make traditional land-use arguments largely irrelevant. The new Housing Green Paper, he noted, could mean that an additional 9,000 new homes would have to be built every year, over and above the 29,000 set out in the draft South East Plan.

After a lively discussion forum chaired by Khalid Aziz, the meeting voted unanimously in favour of a resolution⁷ that:

- supported the rejection of Eagle Star's proposals by the relevant local authorities, and;
- endorsed the conclusions of the South East Plan review.

There were no abstentions.

More follows ...

Notes for Editors

- 1 The Dever Society is an amenity society for the Hampshire Downs and the Dever Valley, and is a registered charity affiliated to the Civic Trust. The Society's principal objective is to conserve, protect and celebrate Hampshire's rural heartland.

The Society has a membership of almost 7,000, drawn from a wide area of Hampshire and elsewhere in Britain. For more details, visit www.deversociety.org
- 2 Photographs from the meeting are available from David Foster on 01962 760874 or e-mail deversociety@compuserve.com
- 3 The meeting, organised by the Dever Society, was held in the Warren Hall, Micheldever Station at **7:30pm** on **Tuesday 11th December 2007**.
- 4 Eagle Star first launched its scheme for a new 'Micheldever Station Market Town' in 1990. Its original proposal was for a 5,000 dwelling town with its centre at Micheldever Station, between Winchester and Basingstoke, housing around 12,500 people. Since then its plans have grown steadily, and the current proposal stands at 12,500 homes, with a population approaching 30,000. By comparison, the population of Winchester city is around 42,000.

E-mail msmt@bartonwillmore.co.uk for a copy of Eagle Star's proposals.
- 5 The South East Plan will provide the blueprint for development in the south east region for the period 2006 to 2026. An Examination in Public into the draft Plan was carried out by a panel of inspectors earlier this year, and their report was published on 29 August 2007.

For more details, visit www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/
- 6 Eco-towns will be small new towns of at least 5,000-20,000 homes. They are intended to exploit the potential for complete new 'zero-carbon' developments – and, where opportunities exist, schemes should make use of suitable surplus public sector or brownfield land.

The Government's eco-towns prospectus, published in July 2007, can be downloaded from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/ecotownsprospectus>
- 7 The full text of the resolution reads:

"This meeting:
 - opposes Eagle Star's latest attempt to build a new town at Micheldever, this time in the guise of an 'eco-town';
 - endorses the unequivocal rejection of Eagle Star's new settlement at Micheldever Station by Winchester City Council and Hampshire County Council, with support from the surrounding local authorities;
 - endorses the conclusions of the Panel of Inspectors which presided over the Examination in Public into the South East Regional Plan, that there is 'insufficient justification for the inclusion of Micheldever Station Market Town in the regional strategy';
 - believes that this rural area should retain its traditional role as an important green buffer between the developed north and south of Hampshire."

Further details

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