

VILLAGE *View*

The Watermead Village Newsletter

Government Housing Policy, and what it means to Watermead

The Government has announced new policy guidelines that will reduce the targeted housing build and place emphasis on the reuse of, so called, brownfield sites. This contrasts with the previous policy that allowed the, more or less, unrestricted use of greenfield sites and the consequent encroachment into the countryside.

Unsurprisingly, there was an immediate outcry that this would increase house prices and availability. Certainly, brownfield sites are often more expensive to develop. There is frequently the cost of demolition. There is sometimes the cost of decontamination. On the other hand services such as drainage, gas, water, electricity and telephones are usually close at hand.

However, the cost of redeveloping land has little bearing on the cost of housing. Houses cost what the market will stand, not what they cost to build. Roughly a third is the land cost, a third the building cost and the balance profit. Consider Watermead, the cost of preparing the land for development, with all the flood prevention measures, didn't prevent the houses being marketed at competitive prices and nor will the on-costs of brownfield sites.

As well as reducing the encroachment of development into the countryside, brownfield development reduces transportation by locating housing nearer to employment. There is a potential to save a million vehicle miles for every 100 houses relocated from villages to towns. That brings with it savings in road building and pollution.

Watermead was, of course, built on greenfield sites and we are interested in how the new policies will affect us. Unrestrained green field development will lead to Watermead being surrounded by housing estates. The battlefield site and the land to the north are both under pressure. Government policy may well win a respite from unrestrained outward expansion but it brings other dangers that can only be addressed by firm planning controls that have hitherto been conspicuously lacking.

We have seen every available piece of green space in the town taken for development. It makes financial sense to redevelop the football ground, the hotel site, the fitness club, the cricket pitch and the garden centre site for housing.

The war has not been won, battle lines have merely been redrawn.

Malcolm C Nickolls
LLB(Hons) DipArch ARIBADipLAALIACI Arb FRSA

Village View
on the
Internet



Web Address to be Advised

Editorial Mailbox -
jbray@fdce04.europe.dg.com

