

South Marston and the Eastern Development Area (EDA)

Swindon Borough Council have received the first draft of the proposal for the EDA (which stretches from Commonhead Roundabout to the South Marston village and East to the Community forest) from their consultants, LDA.

This is due to go to various Council committees for amendment before release for Public Consultation in October.

As it presently stands the points that most affect us are:

1. The report recognises that a single community is not appropriate for the site. It adopts the concept of an archipelago, a cluster of 'island' communities separated by barriers such as the railway and the River Cole and its tributaries.
2. It proposes that the first phase of development extend out from a new district centre based on the current Sainsbury site along the A420.
3. If this is accepted, then development north of the railway should be delayed until after this phase has achieved 'critical mass' to support the centre.
4. The proposal for North of the railway is for 2 communities, one based on South Marston, the other to the East of South Marston Brook, on the rising ground to the South of Nightingale Lane.
5. The masterplan as currently drawn (Scenario 1) proposes:
 - * 900 - 1,000 new dwellings at South Marston at 35dph
 - * 900 - 1,000 dwellings at "East Marston"
 - * New retail facilities - 3-9 shops in South Marston
6. Scenario 2 transfers the southern part of the extension to South Marston to "East Marston":
 - * 400 - 500 new dwellings at South Marston at 35dph
 - * 1,400 - 1,500 dwellings at "East Marston"
 - * New retail facilities - 3-9 shops in "East Marston"
7. Whether we are the larger or the smaller community the proposed expansion for this village is larger than in our submitted document.
8. In any event South Marston will be given its own strategy within the overall plan to ensure integrated development.
9. The plan anticipates housing on Crown Timber and on the Thornhill Industrial site. Currently it is planned to cover the whole of the Thornhill site.

Colin

Thanks for your response.

In terms of your first point, do you mean that you would like East Marston to be included within any Core Strategy policy for South Marston or that it is important that it be included within plans for the EDA? Either way, I think that it is a fair point and it is our intention to do just that.

In terms of your more detailed questions, it is important to remember that the masterplan is still in draft form and could yet be changed, but the intention is that the existing school at South Marston be retained to serve South Marston and that a new school be provided in East Marston. The total number of primary schools on site would be 7.

We are very aware of the concerns of residents in all the surrounding villages of the impact of traffic, but we cannot solve the problem of rat-running and the general concerns with existing residents of increased numbers of traffic associated with development with a strategic masterplan. There will be additional traffic generated by development and this will need to be looked at in more detail through a Transport Assessment accompanying a planning application and must be consistent with the emerging Swindon Transport Strategy. We believe that it would be the wrong way round to begin a masterplanning exercise by identifying what we do not want development to do before we identify what we do want it to do. Our approach is to view the EDA as an opportunity rather than a problem to be mitigated. In approaching it in this way we believe we will deliver a better quality output. That is not to say that it is not important to consider the impact of increased traffic but we cannot solve that kind of detailed problem in this document.

In terms of community buildings, we are seeking to promote Multi Agency Centres in various locations throughout the development (e.g. extended use schools, district centre and neighbourhood centres), which would perform a similar type role to community centres but their role is to be in use as much as possible for as many uses as possible. South Marston obviously already has its village hall and therefore I see no need for another facility in South Marston unless you specifically see value in it and / or the local centre is located in South Marston. If the local centre and bulk of development end up at New Marston however, it makes sense for any community facilities to be located there too.

The local centres in the Western Expansion Area and Northern Development Area are actually very successful, they are fully occupied in most instances, with a low turnover of units and are very busy most of the time. Examples of this are Abbey Meads Village Centre, Taw Hill Village Centre and Shaw Local Centre. Possibly the only one, which isn't performing that well at present is St Andrew's Ridge, which has a vacant unit. It is intended however that these centre be co-located with schools creating an area of vitality and vibrancy at different times of the day that places schools at the heart of the local community. If a local centre was established where there is no historic use without additional development then I would expect it to struggle, however given the scale of proposed development and the market assessment work underpinning the masterplan we can be confident that 4 local centres and 1 district centre is viable and realistic. That said, the location of that centre north of the railway line depends very much on the location of the biggest mass of dwellings.

Hopefully you find that helpful and we would welcome any further comments you have on the emerging plan prior to the conclusion of the report for public consultation. I am out of the office from today for the majority of August but if you have any further issues or questions then please contact Richard Bell, although he will be in the office intermittently over the next month.

Thanks
Kenny

Following the release of the proposal for final consultation in October Kenny Duncan anticipates that they will be holding two public consultation events in South Marston during the consultation period.

The Parish Council will be looking to involve villagers in the process with the aim of reaching consensus and to provide effective voice for the village.

We initially note that:

Scenario1 provides for more infrastructure development and would be the more dynamic option.

Scenario 2 is closer to the plan that we previously formulated in terms of numbers and area covered. As such it has 'minimum change' attraction.

As indicated, we do not have a copy of the document and it is in any event subject to approval and amendment by committees of Swindon Borough Council. Therefore we propose that formal debate is delayed until the plan is published. However, if you have any initial points, please email our clerk, Roger Powell at clerksmpc@aol.com.

Colin McEwen

Chairman, South Marston Parish Council